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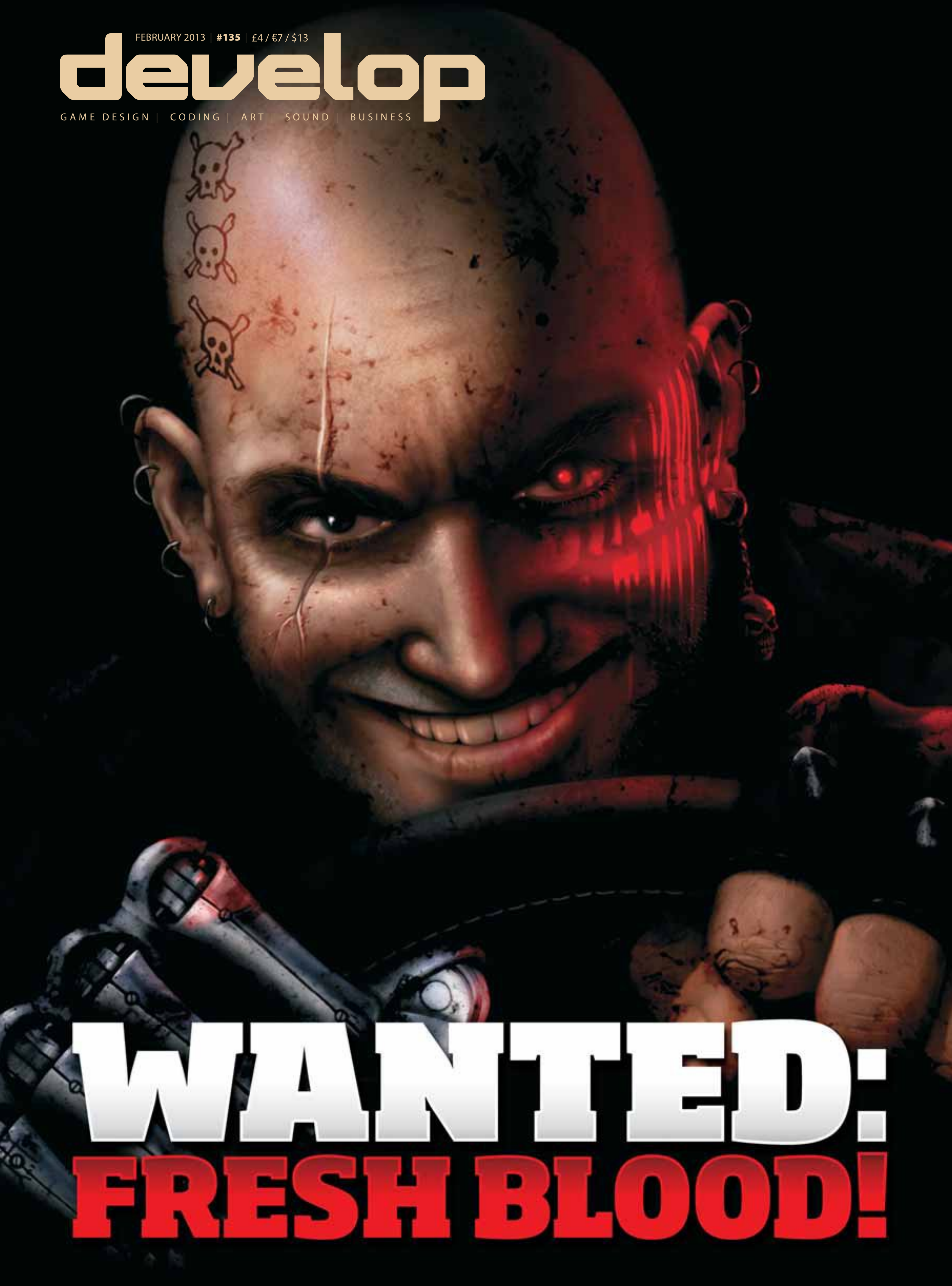

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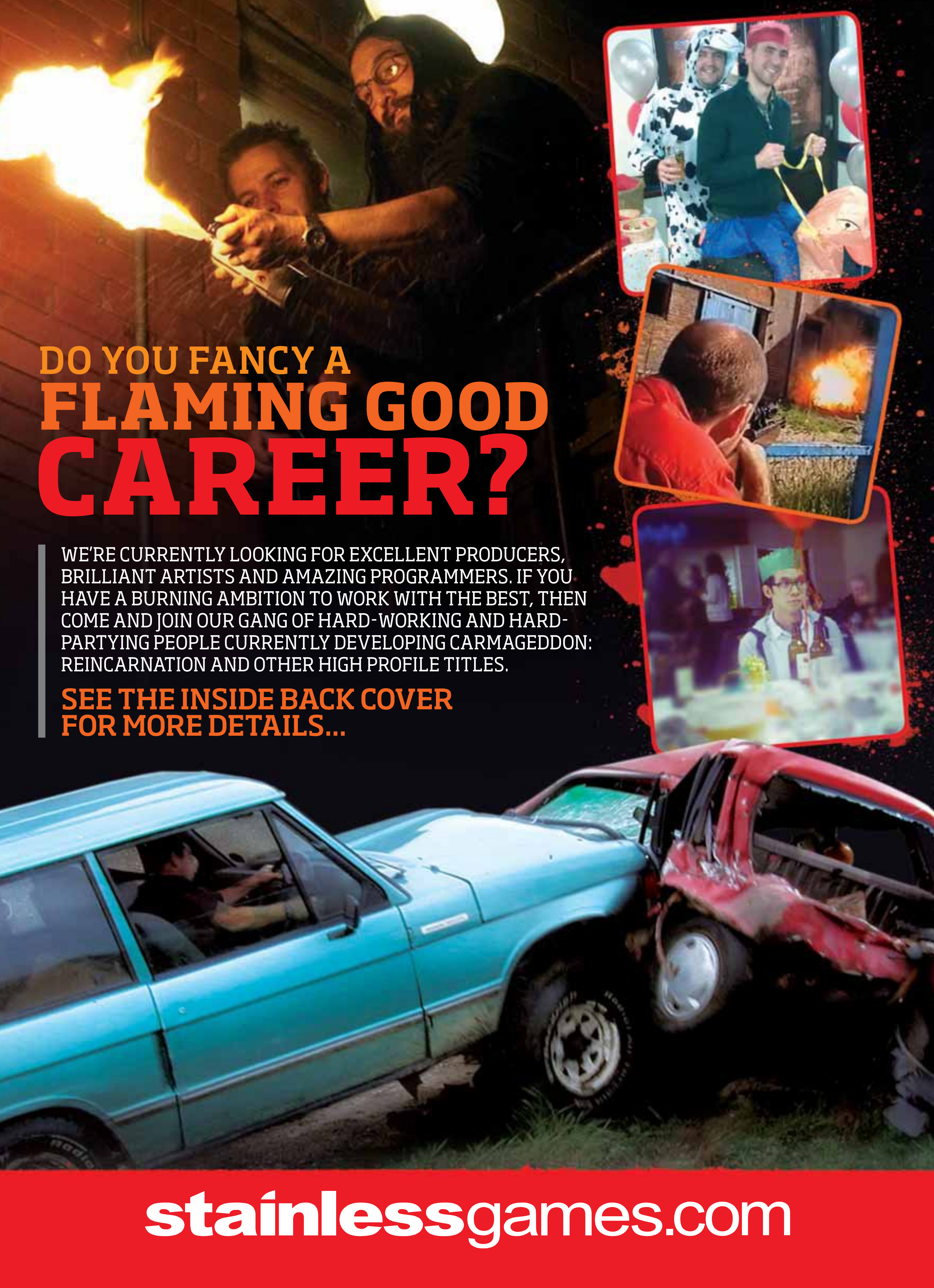

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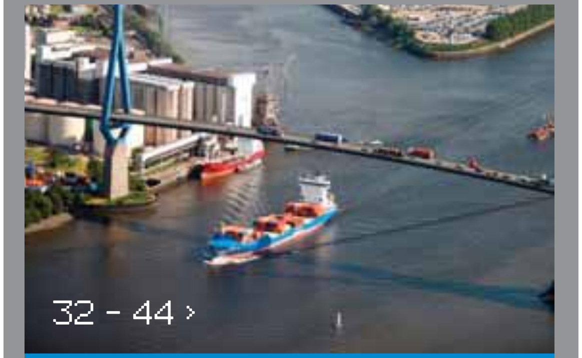

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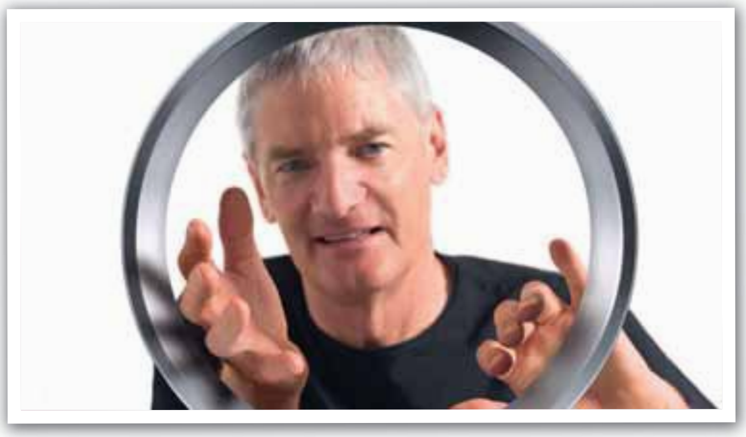

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"I would love us to make a really big world-building game that would be our Halo or our Black Ops. Something with a really big team."
Jonathan Ross, HotSauce Interactive, page 18

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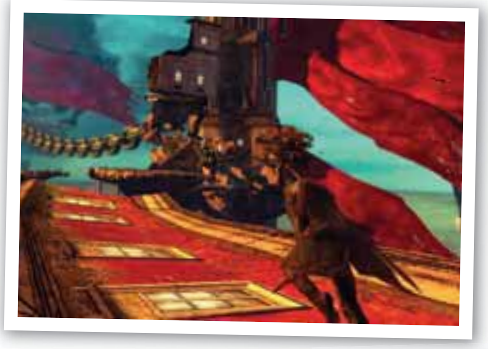

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EDITORIAL

AND WE'RE OFF!

AS I WRITE, the month of January is coming to a close. *Develop's* office is surrounded by snow and ice, and as the trees sway leafless in the bitterly cold wind, it's hard to imagine there's energy or activity anywhere on the globe.

And yet in the games industry, in 2013 the typically slow opening weeks of the new year have delivered a remarkable amount to look forward too. The production of PS2s in Japan may have finally ceased, but increasingly strong rumours about the next consoles from Microsoft and Sony are becoming a daily source of excitement and speculation.

Meanwhile three new consoles have been revealed in the Piston 'Steam Box', Nvidia's Project Shield and PlayJam's GameStick (turn the page for more on that), causing a flurry of excitement.

Elsewhere, numerous new studios have opened their doors publically for the first time, including Microsoft's Lift London and Crytek's Istanbul outfit.

Sure, there's challenges; the industry's accelerated state of change presents plenty to worry over, and even the Kickstarter bubble may be about to burst (check out our own Craig Chapple's superb opinion piece on the matter on www.develop-online.net).

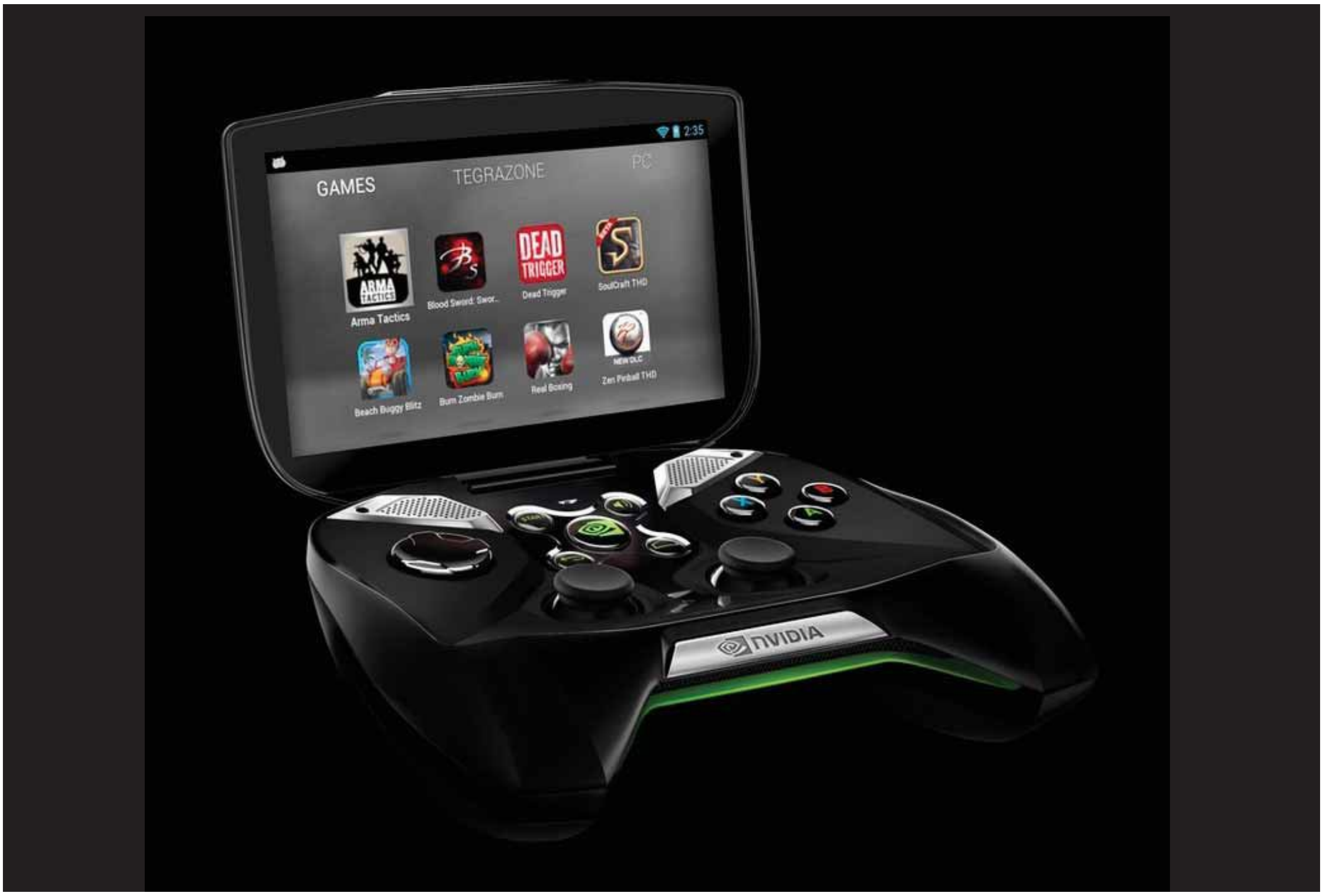
But it's a good time to be making games. And it's also a great time to be looking for a new role – or even first job – in the industry. It's competetive out there, but opportunities abound, and to help you secure a fresh position, or employ the right new staff for your team, we've gathered insight from leading recruiters and studios across the globe, who provide a wealth of advice from page 22, right before we present the key data from our in-depth Salary Survey, analysing pay and working conditions in the industry.

And GDC is right around the corner, meaning a whole host of exciting news and announcements are just weeks away. I'll be there, of course, with others from the *Develop* team, and I'm keen to meet you. My email address is right below.

So don't hesitate to get in touch, and we'll you in San Francisco.

Will Freeman
will.freeman@intentmedia.co.uk

Will



New year, new hardware

2013 opens with three original gaming platforms looking to make their mark. But what does it all mean for devs?

PlayJam's Anthony Johnson (top), and David Braben of Frontier Developments and Raspberry Pi (bottom).

by Will Freeman

THE OPENING DAY of 2013 saw three original hardware platforms emerge, as Valve, Nvidia and PlayJam all revealed new consoles.

Nvidia's Project Shield, Valve's Xi3-manufacturered Piston and PlayJam's Android-powered GameStick are all looking to compete with established platforms from Nintendo, Sony and Microsoft. And they follow on from 2012's boom in new hardware offerings, such as Oculus Rift and Ouya.

Nvidia's new platform, announced at CES in Las Vegas, combines a traditional console controller and screen in the form of a portable currently carrying the concept name Project Shield. Allowing for the streaming of games from a PC, Shield is powered by the new Nvidia Tegra 4, custom 72-core GeForce GPU and the first quad-core application of ARM's CPU core, the Cortex-A15.

"We were inspired by a vision that the rise of mobile and cloud technologies will free us from our boxes, letting us game anywhere, on any screen," said Jen-Hsun Huang, Nvidia co-founder and CEO of deciding to enter the gaming portable space. "We imagined a device that would do for games what the iPod and Kindle have done for music and books, letting us play in a cool new way."

Shield has already attracted support from a number of high-profile industry figures including Epic vice president Mark Rein and Ubisoft co-founder Yves Guillemot.

STEAM POWERED

Valve's long-touted 'Steam Box' also debuted at CES, under the concept name Piston. The version on display consisted of a modular computer developed by hardware maker Xi3, and is based on its X7A line of diminutive systems. Xi3 has stated it had received investment from Valve to build the PC.

The Piston is designed to be used with Steam's Big Picture mode, which allows Steam and its titles to be played on a large TV screen. It is understood Valve will also develop its own version of the platform.

"Today marks the beginning of a new era for Xi3," said the company's founder, president and CEO Jason Sullivan on unveiling the system. "This new development stage product will allow users to take full advantage of their large high-definition TV displays for an amazing computer game experience. As a result, this new system could provide access to thousands of gaming titles through an integrated system that exceeds the capabilities of leading game consoles."

The final console revealed in January, the GameStick, comes from casual games outfit PlayJam, and takes the approximate form of a USB stick that can be slotted into a TV's HDMI port. The new device will run Android games and comes with a Bluetooth controller. The console also slots into the controller for easier portability. Funded on Kickstarter, the GameStick met its $100,000 pledge level within 30 hours of its launch on the crowdfunding website, and at the time of writing has received more than three times that amount in backing.

"The mobile games industry has spawned a revolution in affordable gaming and Android is set to be the widest distributed platform for games," Anthony Johnson, CMO

A mock-up of the Xi3 produced Piston 'Steam Box', and (opposite page) Nvidia's Project Shield

THE 'OTHER' NEXT GENERATION

How the PlayStation 4 won't look

AS THIS ISSUE of *Develop* closed, a number of rumours and reports emerged predicting that the PlayStation 4 and next Xbox would be released this year. Baird Equity Research's Colin Sebastian predicted that the PS4 will be released in October, and that Microsoft will launch the new Xbox in November. The analyst also suggested E3 2013 will see the consoles unveiled, while president of Sony Home Entertainment Hiroshi Sakamoto hinted to French website *Emol.com* the PS4 could debut sometime earlier than that.

of Playjam confirmed to *Develop*, suggesting mobile platforms have done much to inspire the new generation of consoles. "The team behind GameStick have been passionate about bringing affordable gaming to TV for years and Android delivers a stable, viable route to achieve this."

DEEP POCKETS

But can these consoles thrive in a competitive market increasingly challenging the long-established manufacturers? Phil Harrison, corporate vice president at Microsoft EMEA, and former president of Sony Worldwide Studios, suggests it won't be easy.

"CES is always very interesting," said Harrison, speaking at a London press conference. "But entering the hardware business is a hard thing to do. You need to have deep pockets. Hardware can be successful but it's rare to get new hardware to scale. I'm talking tens or hundreds of millions.

"It's about having a supply chain and a distribution model, it takes thousands of people to make a reality."

Similarly, Frontier boss and key figure in the development of the Raspberry Pi coding-focused platform David Braben warned of challenges ahead for those building entirely new platforms.

"The increasing diversity of platforms complicates the market somewhat – though each present major different opportunities going forwards," Braben told *Develop*. "The real challenge will be getting enough customers to reach a critical mass with so many new machines coming through, and ensuring piracy is at a low enough level to sustain sales – as each machine will require a port to get games onto each platform."

Braben went on to warn that – while Raspberry Pi illustrated how succesful establishing a new platform can be – maintaining performance, tools support, distribution and a software range is difficult.

> ***"Entering the hardware business is a hard thing to do. You need to have deep pockets."***
>
> Phil Harrison, Microsoft

But Braben did state that the new platforms do offer games developers a significant opportunity. And he's not alone,

"The launch of a new hardware platform should be good news for developers and the industry," Eidos life president and campaigner for games development education Ian Livingstone stated to *Develop*. "Most software developers are platform agnostic and usually welcome new devices through which to leverage their content. And software sells hardware, so the feeling is mutual.

"However, there is no guarantee of success, and sometimes it can prove costly for developers to launch content on platforms that ultimately fail in the marketplace."

OPEN FOR ALL

Indies are also optimistic – if pragmatic – about the arrival of so many new hardware options.

"These new platforms are super exciting," said *Thomas Was Alone* developer Mike Bithell, speaking with *Develop*. "The most important element, as far as I'm concerned, is the business behind the console. These upcoming platforms look to be very open to indies as much as players, and that can only be a good thing.

"While the specific form factors of this hardware will likely go through a fair few iterations in the coming years – the Shield in particular seems pretty ridiculous to me – they are very interesting as an indication of a larger trend, where players are falling out of love with closed platforms."

From an indie perspective, says Bithell, that simply means studios will to have to jump through fewer hoops.

The middleware sector also appears to view these new machines positively as Dr Chris Doran, founder and COO at lighting tools specialist Geomerics confirmed.

"For middleware companies like ourselves this is a big opportunity," he explained to *Develop*. "Cross-platform development is hard, particularly if there is a large range in target performance. Well-designed middleware can take some of the pain away from making your game cross-platform. With Enlighten, for example, we already support all of the new platforms, including those based on Linux."

Doran admitted that the challenge for middleware providers is to develop technology in a way that supports the widest possible base of platforms, but pointed out that such pressures have long been ordinary operating practice for any middleware providers.

How the trio of newly announced consoles will fare remains to be seen, but seemingly a wealth of support for GameStick, Piston and Shield currently exists.

Top-to-bottom: Indie developer Mike Bithell, Nvidia's Jen-Hsun Huang, and Xi3's Jason Sullivan

//COMMENT: BUSINESS

Gaming's fiscal cliff

by **Nick Gibson**, Games Investor Consulting

OnLive's collapse sent ripples of unease across the venture capital sector, but Nick Gibson believes it will bounce back

WE HAVE TAKEN for granted the last four years' pattern of declining retail games sales and growing network gaming revenue, which has been at least supported, if not driven, by a buoyant mergers and acquisitions (M&A) sector and healthy injections of investment into privately held games businesses. While 2011 saw both M&A transaction volume and value and total private placement value, reach an all-time high, 2012 saw the number and value of these transactions fall off a cliff. What are the causes of this alarming collapse in games company transactions and how will it affect the industry?

With 98 games company M&A transactions (the vast majority of them acquisitions) representing an estimated $2.1bn in value and over $1.5bn raised for privately held games companies worldwide, 2011 was an exceptional year, following an equally barnstorming 2010. Both these years witnessed a fervour around network gaming and in particular smartphone, tablet and social network gaming. Venture capital helped fuel the initial market exploration stage for these sectors, then piled in to fund the feverish landgrab phase.

SKY HIGH

With so much capital flowing into games businesses from VCs and angel investors, valuations were driven skywards. As is often the case, this in turn led to a boom in M&A activity as the better-funded companies sought to use their augmented cash reserves and high valuations to accelerate their growth via acquisition. With exits being achieved so frequently and often at such high valuations, investors' enthusiasm for the sector only increased. Thus, the two corporate finance activities of M&A and private fundraisings orbited and accelerated each other to its 2011 peak.

2012 saw the number of games M&A deals tumble 40 per cent and the value of these transactions fall by 30 per cent. More remarkably, investment in privately held games companies fell by over 60 per cent to $0.6bn; a fraction of that raised during any of the previous five years and significantly worse than the wider VC industry's 2012 performance. However, the irrational exuberance of the M&A and private equity markets also played a key role in 2012's dismal performance, pumping up unjustifiably high valuations for key companies that would be used by all others as benchmarks. The same herd-instinct that drove the up-cycle precipitated and then accelerated a vicious down-cycle. Zynga's disastrous share price performance following its overvalued December 2011 IPO, and OnLive's dramatic collapse helped create a prevailing investor sentiment of extreme pessimism and risk aversion during 2012 that was only exacerbated by the continuing global macro-economic woes.

Was this a bubble bursting or even equivalent to the early 2000s internet stocks' collapse? Not in my view.

RISKY BUISNESS

Clearly, VCs will largely remain risk-averse, increasingly investing only in companies with proven sustainability and clear growth trajectories. They will remain unwilling to accept rich valuations too. This reduced activity and downward valuation pressure will continue to restrict the M&A market, reducing the exit options for games company shareholders seeking to cash out. The unfortunate collateral damage from all this is that there will be less funding for more innovative and speculative ventures and this may well remain the case for some time.

From the bottom of the cliff things do look gloomy, but eventually the capital will start to flow more freely again. 2007-to-2011 was a period that saw huge returns for many investors. I believe, therefore, that there is considerable latent demand from the investment community and, as financial markets slowly recover, triggers such as the emergence of a new market, platform or distribution method, and the arrival of new bellwethers to replace the old, apparently discredited ones, could set another virtuous circle going again. It may not happen in the next few years but history cannot help but repeat itself.

Nick Gibson is a director at Games Investor Consulting, providing research, strategy consulting and corporate finance services to the games, media and finance industries. **www.gamesinvestor.com**

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THIS MONTH: Jonathan Ross' games development debut **Autodesk's DirectX 11 support in focus** Kanzi's industry spanning UI solution

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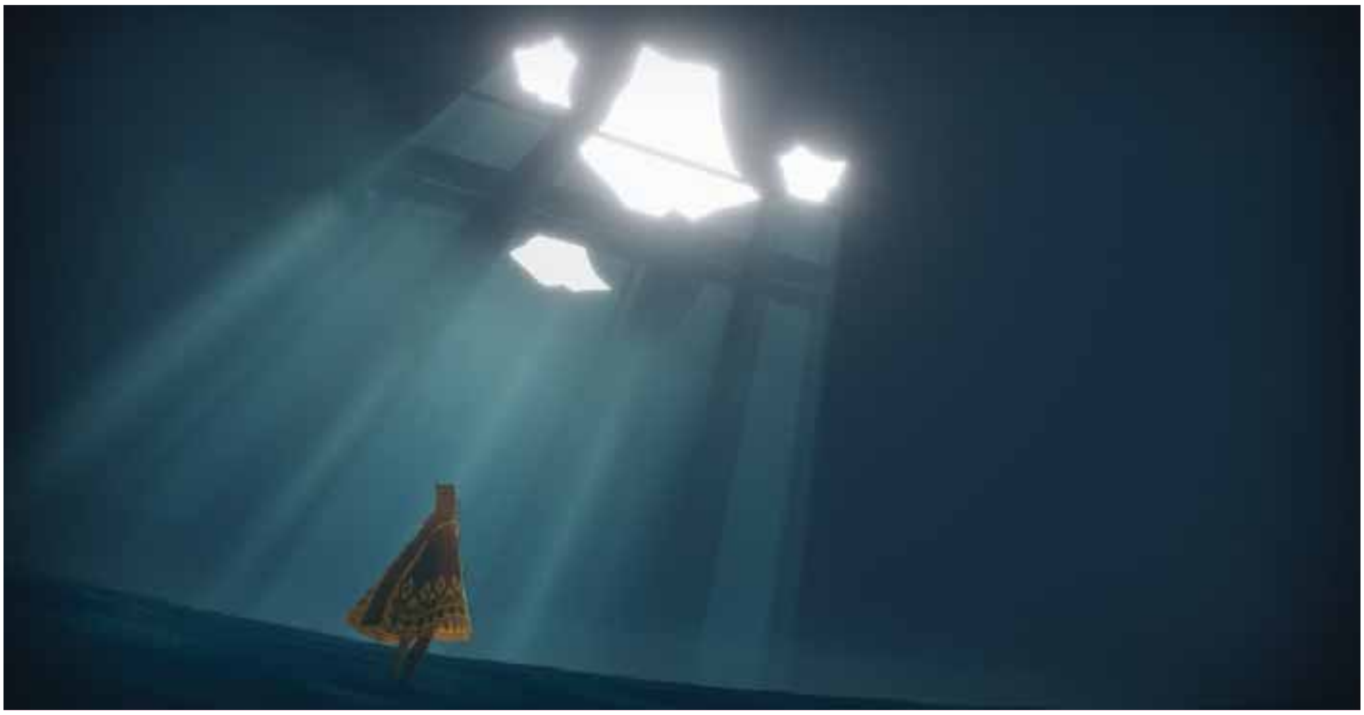
//COMMENT: TRENDS

New media, new habits?

by **Ana Kronschnabl,** Fluffy Logic



Journey is a game that offers players a freeform experience, says Kronschnabl

AT CERTAIN TIMES I am struck by how my experience of entertainment and media has changed. This applies to both my physical engagement – my mode of consumption, and the product itself. If I look back over the last few years it is quite clear how pointless my cable subscription has become.

I wouldn't say I am watching less TV, but that I have finally rejected any concept of scheduled watching and now watch at the time and in the place of my choosing. The delivery device varies. It could be on my TV in my sitting room, it could be on a laptop in front of the fire; it makes little difference to my overall viewing pleasure.

Although I probably still watch a similar amount I can notice a difference in relation to the type of programme I watch. My family and I have our preferences. Some we champion individually and some we watch together; I have introduced my daughter to *Buffy* and *Arrow* and am working my way towards the entire series of *Star Trek*. Oh, lucky girl. To avoid giving the impression that my viewing covers purely US horror and sci-fi series, I have also been expanding my taste to European detective series, and have enjoyed *The Killing* and *Hunted*.

The trend that I am seeing, however, is that the act of conscious choice means that I am less likely to catch something by chance. I will happily watch things that have been recommended that do not fall into these particular categories, but I no longer sit down to watch one programme and end up watching a random documentary about salmon breeding.

SIMPLE PLEASURES

So, if this narrowing of focus has happened to my TV viewing I was wondering if any kind of pattern had started to emerge out of my game playing habits. Well, there is the family fun-time, *Just Dance*-kind of playing that was initiated by our purchase of a Wii.

> ***"The movement of games into a more mainstream space over the last few years, along with advances in technology, has made games far more prevalent."***

Other games also seem to be exhibiting certain tendencies; *Journey*, *Dyad* and *From Dust* for example. All of these games, although containing certain aspects we could call 'game-like', would not be described as 'typical' console games. Although becoming more common, these games are good examples of a trend I believe is becoming more and more popular: game playing for the shear pleasure of it.

The movement of games into a more mainstream space over the last few years, along with the massive advances in computer technology, has made games far more prevalent and more visible. We have gamification, with aspects of game mechanics being brought into other forms with achievements, rewards and even embedding smaller, casual games within all sorts of products. If we remove these more goal-orientated aspects, we are left with the experience itself; the enjoyment of playing. I have often enjoyed games with just a hint of a goal such as *Flow* and *Flower* – being a confirmed Jenova Chen fan.

GENTLER TIMES

A lot of the casual games seem to be full to overflowing with game mechanics and drivers to push us towards more engagement, there are others which are moving away from this entirely. These are games which are reducing the frantic nature of our engagement and providing a much more chilled, sensuous experience.

What I am describing is an experience of media consumption that is reflective of all the shifts that are taking place within modern media development, both technical and creative. The devices we use to access these seem to be less relevant. As films and games move onto our phones and our consoles can be used to access television, the attention seem to be moving more towards the content and the experience. All of this before we even consider the affects of storytelling on gameplay and the influence of games on films. But that's another story.

Ana Kronschnabl is CEO and creative director at games and digital content studio Fluffy Logic, which has produced titles for a wealth of platforms across console, mobile and online. Fluffy Logic is currently at work on social game *UrZoo*. **www.fluffylogic.net**

//COMMENT: STUDIO MANAGEMENT

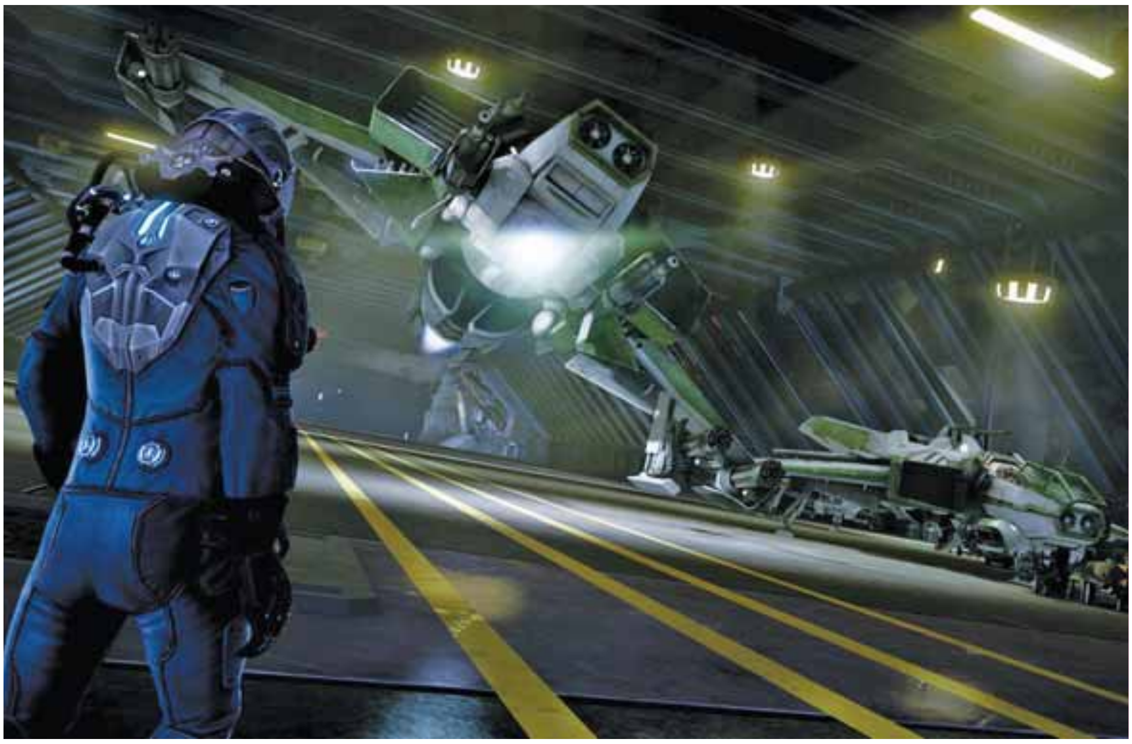
The wisdom of the crowd

Tim Heaton, The Creative Assembly

YES, I KNOW, it's really hard to find enough money to make a game. Whatever the size of your ambitions it's difficult. It scales from just you and your cat, living off some savings and eating Sheba – and the cat has to go through the bins, through venture capital backed start-ups who may leave you high and dry at any point, up to scary mega-sums invested by mega-publishers. All of those require your heart and soul – usually as payment for your right to make the game. But in any relationship that includes investment the lender will do due diligence and will audit progress. It's their money after all, and they're only investing to make more. It's hard work every step of the way.

Or, you could just look to crowdfunding. That's where people just give you money, for nothing better than a promise and an overvalued place in the credits.

Okay, so maybe that's a little unfair, but crowdfunding for video games is in a precarious place at the moment. It could easily drop out of favour, and it's hard to see how it will fix itself.



Chris Roberts' Star Citizen (above) shattered crowdfunding records by making a total of $6.2m

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Firstly, its audience is core fanboy gamers, and not your average game buyer. They love all the games developers with history and character – Peter Molyneux, Tim Schaffer, Chris Roberts, etcetera. And so do I. But that's a pretty restricted bunch of people, and arguably not the most deserving of crowdfunding. Without a name or track record, it's really hard to get your idea across. Ideally, you need a prototype, and to create that you need money. Very few people 'borrowing' money in the traditional way can convince publishers to spend money without a prototype, although in some lucky cases, and in the case of internal studios, that prototype is paid for. So, unless you were famous in the 90s you're going to struggle to get visibility for your brilliant idea.

Secondly, brilliant ideas rarely make hit games. It's 95 per cent about the implementation. And that's down to the team, how they work together, how they make decisions, and so on. That's how successful publishers decide a winner – they watch how a team develops a game, and make hard decisions at critical milestones during its development. Crowdfunding often doesn't allow any visibility, and you've fully 'invested' at that point anyhow.

Thirdly, the amount of money being raised may not match the amount needed. For people outside of the industry, the cost of making games is just astonishingly high. When I say some of the sums involved out loud I'm shocked – and I mostly know where the money goes. I think pitching a PC game for £500,000 to people outside of the industry makes it sound like a major production, something that can compete with boxed games, or successful free-to-play games. £500,000 is about 15-to-20 people for six months. With no marketing. It's not impossible to conceive of a successful game made in that time, but it's certainly not typical by today's standards.

> ***"The worst case is they burn all your money and give up. In many ways, they haven't lost a thing by doing that; you can imagine why they're keen on this model."***

So what happens if you need an extra two months of development? Back to crowd funding? Ask the same people who are already invested, but now feel they have to put more money in to get the game? Sure, maybe they only put in a small sum to get what is in effect a pre-order, but maybe they haven't. Maybe they really believed and made a relatively significant commitment. They're feeling the publishers dilemma, wherein traditionally funding a project has cost so much money there's no going back, and it's easier to pay more than write-off what's been spent. Sure, the developer can offer more incentives, and sometimes these are nice, and exclusive, and fun, but there are only so many of these. And, by definition, they have to be 'cheap', because that's not what the money is for.

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

Finally, if the game gets finished, you get your goods. That's an interesting business arrangement. The developer has asked you to believe in their idea, and to invest in what is inherently a risky venture. You get, at best, your money back in the form of a game and some other peripheral stuff that you want. And the developer takes none of the risk. The worst case is they burn all your money and give up. In many ways, they haven't lost a thing by doing that. In the best case they make a lot of money, and have to give none back. You can imagine why they're keen on this business model.

Now, I know I'm being the Grinch here, and that crowdfunding is about altruism and support for good things. It also spreads risk so no individual is particularly exposed. I'm also not suggesting there is anything other than freedom and community spirit driving developers who choose this funding method. But there will be significant failures in the very young market that is crowdfunding. My advice is to understand there's significant risk involved and pick the project you support because of your love for it, and nothing more.

Tim Heaton is studio director at The Creative Assembly, the UK-founded studio behind the acclaimed *Total War* series of PC games, as well as numerous other works including original and licensed products.
www.creative-assembly.co.uk

//COMMENT: MOBILE

Attitude and personality for employment

by **Will Luton**, Games Consultant

Be open and ready to listen, says Will Luton, as he sparks up a light bulb to the moth of narcissism

THE MAJORITY OF games career advice you'll read is the nuts and bolts of using recruitment agencies or building a portfolio. What is less discussed is your attitude and your personality.

Who you know and how much they like you has a huge impact on your likelihood of getting employed or promoted, especially in the incestuous UK development scene. If you shit your pants at Company A in the morning, they'll be chuckling about it at Company B before noon.

However, if you win friends and influence people, the grapevine blossoms with positive words for you. And while you can't please all of the people all of the time there's lots you can do to manage your 'personal brand'.

So, I spoke with universally liked industry nice man James Parker, the freelance script writer and designer, about how to approach your career. Here, I describe our findings.

KNOW WHO YOU ARE

Pop psychology edict dictates you are either a Type A or B person: As are highly strung ambitious types with lots of opinion, while Bs are laid-back steady workers. Knowing yourself and how you behave in a group, plus the personality types of those around you will hold you back from potential conflict.

Making games is about solving ill-defined problems with multiple potential solutions. Career-hindering conflict often arises from differences of opinion in tacking these challenges. Type As overpower Bs and clash with other As, while a group of Bs saunter along not challenging each other.

Disagreement is good – the challenging of opinions seeks exploration of other, often better, solutions. However, when disagreement becomes anger and frustration teams fall apart. It is the job of everyone to check themselves and others around them. Ask: Am I being a dick here? Is everyone getting heard, including me? Do I fully understand everyone? Should I concede my point on this issue?

> **“99 per cent of people in the industry are friendly, passionate people. The reason they're here and not estate agents is that they love games, so be at ease.”**

If you think someone isn't doing this, pull them aside and speak to them privately. It will improve your happiness, your output and your career.

BE IN THE ROOM

Wallflowers get employed and promoted less than the life-and-soul types. It's a given. Yet, affecting an extroverted personality makes you feel uncomfortable and come across as disingenuous to others.

However, to progress your career you need to befriend decision makers; even if you're shy. Being in the room is the start of that: Get to as many meet ups, jams, socials, expos and conference as you can. Then talk to people.

Ninety-nine per cent of people in the industry are friendly, passionate people. The reason they're here and not estate agents is that they love games, so be at ease.

Remember their names and ask about their careers and background. Request they introduce you to others; ask for their opinions or help. This is a light bulb to the moth of narcissism: people like to have their self-image of greatness reinforced. But be humble yourself. Join the conversation and don't force it around to your agenda.

I'd extend this advice to Twitter: Get on and chat with people, but think about what you'd say to someone's face and avoid, as James puts it, "being a keyboard warrior".

GOING PUBLIC

There may come a time in your career when you get the chance to be public facing – either in the press or by speaking at conferences. This gives you the chance to propel your notoriety – being on stage or in the pages of industry press affords a level reverence towards you.

However, being in the public eye, especially with contentious opinions, has been seen to open you to career-damaging public criticism, amplified through social media, which can be hard to deal with, even for the thick-skinned.

While it may boost your progress it isn't essential. Many build long, successful careers without being particularly known, while others just enjoy going out and representing themselves or their companies.

If you feel comfortable, then do it. But remember to enjoy it, be open and don't take yourself too seriously. People warm to those that are honest, humble and happy.

BE A VETERAN

This advice is likely contentious. However, if you take away one thing let it be this: your career will rest on more than your ability.

You need to work on your qualifications and interview technique, but also pay mind to who you are, how you work with people and what impression you leave. Successful industry veterans often leave a photofit impression: passionate, friendly, confident and knowledgable.

They get that aura from working hard, being nice to people and, let me tell you from personal experience, never shitting themselves at Company A.

Will Luton is a games consultant specialising in design and free-to-play. Formerly, he served at Sega Europe and award-winning boutique studio Mobile Pie. Follow Will on Twitter at @will_luton or visit **www.will-luton.co.uk**

THE MONTH AHEAD

A look at what February has in store for the industry and beyond

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FEBRUARY 5TH
DICE Summit 2013.
Golf, go-karting and the AIAS awards at the esteemed developers' summit in Vegas.

FEBRUARY 8TH
Dead Space 3.
Isaac faces Necromorphs on a frozen world in his bid to silence the parasite for good.

FEBRUARY 10TH
Chinese New Year.
It's the Year of the Snake in the Chinese zodiac. More reason to bet on an *MGS5* reveal.

FEBRUARY 12TH
Aliens: Colonial Marines.
Gearbox's vision for the original sci-fi corridor shooter comes out of the shadows.

FEBRUARY 12TH
Casual Connect EU 2013.
A chance for casual games devs to court brands and build new contacts in Hamburg.

FEBRUARY 13TH
World Radio Day.
Hook up your sound system, tune into your favourite station and turn up the volume.

FEBRUARY 14TH
Valentine's Day.
Put your everyday labour of love on hold to show someone you care in your own way.

FEBRUARY 15TH
Wreck-It Ralph.
Disney's homage to the arcade generation and its pixelated stars gets its UK release.

FEBRUARY 21ST
Cloud Gaming Europe.
Advice from established names and specialists about the prospects of cloud gaming.

FEBRUARY 22ND
Metal Gear Rising.
Ninja Raiden is unleashed in Platinum's electrically-charged action romp. Chop, chop.

FEBRUARY 22ND
Crysis 3.
Prophet breaks out his nano-bow to take on the beasts of a ravenous urban jungle.

FEBRUARY 28TH
Rayman Legends.
Ubisoft's limbless hero returns in another gorgeous hand-drawn 2D platformer on Wii U.

DEVELOP DIARY

Your complete games development event calendar for the months ahead

GDC 2013
March 25th to 29th
San Francisco, USA
www.gdconf.com

Spring brings the 27th iteration of the Game Developers Conference.

Held in San Francisco every year, GDC attracts over 22,000 attendees and is a forum for learning, inspiration and networking.

At this year's conference, expect to see some 400-plus lectures, panels and roundtables focusing on next generation tools and technology.

Develop will be out in force to bring you all the goings on from the show.

FEBRUARY 2013

CAROLINA GAMES SUMMIT 2013
February 2nd
Goldsboro, USA
www.carolinagamessummit.com

ICE 2013
February 5th to 7th
London, UK
ice.totallygaming.com

DICE SUMMIT 2013
February 5th to 8th
Las Vegas, USA
www.dicesummit.org

CASUAL CONNECT EUROPE 2013
February 12th to 14th
Hamburg, Germany
europe.casualconnect.org

INDIECADE EAST 2013
February 15th to 17th
New York, USA
www.indiecade.com

SOUND + MUSIC AWARDS 2013
February 21st
London, UK
www.masawards.com

CLOUD GAMING EUROPE 2013
February 21st to 22nd
London, UK
www.cgconfeurope.com

MARCH 2013

BAFTA GAMES AWARDS 2013
March 5th
London, UK
www.bafta.org

SXSW INTERACTIVE 2013
March 8th to 12th
Austin, USA
www.sxsw.com/interactive

GDC 2013
March 25th to 29th
San Francisco, USA
www.gdconf.com

APRIL 2013

THE GADGET SHOW LIVE 2013
April 3rd to 7th
Birmingham, UK
www.gadgetshowlive.net

EAST COAST GAME CONFERENCE 2013
April 24th to 25th
Raleigh, USA
www.ecgconf.com

FESTIVAL OF GAMES 2013
April 24th to 25th
Amsterdam, The Netherlands
www.festivalofgames.nl

MAY 2013

NORDIC GAME CONFERENCE 2013
May 22nd to 24th
Malmö, Sweden
www.nordicgame.com

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develop

The World's Best Game Studios

DEVELOP'S RANKING OF the world's most successful games developers is better than ever, providing a hugely valuable guide to the global games industry.

Now live in Apple's App Store, the latest edition of the *Develop 100* features a list of the top hundred developers in the world based on the revenues generated by their games.

It is available only for iPad, and costs just £4.99 for a volume overflowing with insight and data. That includes profiles on each of the 100 studios, sales numbers and statistics, as well as a wealth of background facts and analysis.

GfK Chart-Track data has been used to formulate the list. Chart-Track has the most accurate chart reporting tools on the planet, monitoring the sale of almost every game and peripheral sold anywhere and everywhere in the UK.

In 2012, EA Canada came out on top, beating the likes of Nintendo, Ubisoft Montreal, Infinity Ward and Traveller's Tales to the top spot.

This month we profile Sega, the once mighty console maker that dropped out of the race and has thrived as a publisher. And, on the opposite page, Naughty Dog, which showed it can push the bar higher yet again with its blockbuster *Uncharted 3*.

And our list doesn't stop with the current volume. Buying the iPad *Develop 100* will guarantee you access to the other Top 100s we'll be launching in the coming months. Volume one is for retail sales, but we'll be adding lists for online, social and mobile standings in future.

Want to find out more?

The *Develop 100* is now available for £4.99 within the *Develop Magazine* app for iPad.

Download the *Develop Magazine* app now through the iTunes store.

£15.93m

Total UK revenue created in 2011 by Sega alone

£9.64m

Total UK revenue for Sega's *Mario & Sonic London 2012 Olympic Games*

» SEGA

UK RETAIL REVENUE IN 2011

£15.93m

» ABOUT

Founded: 1940 (as Standard Games), 1965 (as Sega)
In-house
Location: Tokyo, Japan
www.sega.co.jp

» STARTED OUT

Making mechanical amusements

Sega can boast a history longer and more varied than almost any video games company ever, with a heritage that stretches back to 1940s Hawaii and mechanical amusements.

The company has shone – not just as a publisher, but as a developer – since it dropped out of the console race at the turn of the millennium. 2011 was a financial highlight for the company thanks in part to the build up to the now historic 2012 Olympic Games.

Internally developed title *Mario & Sonic London 2012 Olympics* accounted for a huge amount of its revenue. Its success was not necessarily matched by offerings from its third-party games, but Sega's standing on this list has proved that classic IP remains the bread and butter of this 70-year-old company.

STUDIO'S 2011 BESTSELLERS

	FORMATS	PUBLISHER	RELEASE DATE	TOTAL REV
MARIO & SONIC LONDON 2012 OLYMPIC GAMES	WII	SEGA	NOV 2011	£9.64m
	TOTAL			£9.64m
VIRTUA TENNIS 4	PLAYSTATION 3	SEGA	APR 2011	£1.06m
	XBOX 360	SEGA	APR 2011	£0.72m
	WII	SEGA	APR 2011	£0.22m
	TOTAL			£2.00m
MARIO & SONIC AT OLYMPIC WINTER GAMES	WII	SEGA	OCT 2009	£0.77m
	DS	SEGA	OCT 2009	£0.50m
	TOTAL			£1.27m
SONIC CLASSIC COLLECTION	DS	SEGA	MAR 2010	£1.15m
	TOTAL			£1.15m
RISE OF NIGHTMARES	XBOX 360	SEGA	SEP 2011	£0.89m
	TOTAL			£0.89m

100

Our monthly analysis of the data from the latest Develop 100 continues with a look at two teams bringing in millions

2012 Edition Volume 1

» NAUGHTY DOG

UK RETAIL REVENUE IN 2011

£14.96m

» ABOUT

Founded: 1984
In-house (Owned by SCE)
Location: Santa Monica, USA
www.naughtydog.com

» TRILOGIES COMPLETED

Uncharted • Crash Bandicoot • Jak & Daxter

Naughty Dog's signature series *Uncharted* has dazzled so many that it's easy to forget the team has a history which predates the adventures of Indiana Jones-alike Nathan Drake.

Founded in 1984 as Jam Software, Naughty Dog first made a name for itself with the *Crash Bandicoot* series, and then latterly the *Jak & Daxter* series. The studio was originally dedicated to making Apple II games. Legend has it that the master copy of the company's second release, *Ski Crazed*, was accidentally copied over with bootleg software before completion, prompting founders Andy Gavin and Jason Rubin to re-code the entire project in a single weekend. And almost 30 years later, Naughty Dog still boasts one of the hardest working dev teams.

STUDIO'S 2011 BESTSELLERS

	FORMATS	PUBLISHER	RELEASE DATE	TOTAL REV
UNCHARTED 3: DRAKE'S DECEPTION	PLAYSTATION 3	SONY COMPUTER ENT.	NOV 2011	£13.95m
	TOTAL			£13.95m
UNCHARTED 2: AMONG THIEVES	PLAYSTATION 3	SONY COMPUTER ENT.	OCT 2009	£0.55m
	TOTAL			£0.55m
UNCHARTED DOUBLE PACK	PLAYSTATION 3	SONY COMPUTER ENT.	JUL 2011	£0.27m
	TOTAL			£0.27m
UNCHARTED: DRAKE'S FORTUNE	PLAYSTATION 3	SONY COMPUTER ENT.	DEC 2007	£0.20m
	TOTAL			£0.20m

£232.46m

Total UK revenue created in 2011 by the Top Five studios in the USA

£42.20m

Total UK revenue of the five SCE studios to make the *Develop 100* list

» THE 100 STUDIOS

DEVELOPER	COUNTRY
1ST PLAYABLE	USA
2K CZECH	CZECH REPUBLIC
343 INDUSTRIES	USA
AMAZE ENTERTAINMENT	USA
ASYLUM	UNITED KINGDOM
AVALANCHE SOFTWARE	USA
AVALANCHE STUDIOS	SWEDEN
BEHAVIOUR INTERACTIVE	CANADA
BETHESDA	USA
BIGPARK	CANADA
BIOWARE	CANADA
BLACK LANTERN	USA
BLIZZARD ENTERTAINMENT	USA
BLUE CASTLE GAMES	CANADA
BUNGIE	USA
CAPCOM	JAPAN
CAT DADDY	USA
CERASUS.MEDIA	GERMANY
CITY INTERACTIVE	POLAND
CODEMASTERS	UNITED KINGDOM
CODEMASTERS BIRMINGHAM	UNITED KINGDOM
CREATIVE ASSEMBLY	UNITED KINGDOM
CRITERION GAMES	UNITED KINGDOM
CRYTEK	GERMANY
DIMPS	JAPAN
EA BLACK BOX	CANADA
EA BRIGHT LIGHT	UNITED KINGDOM
EA CANADA	CANADA
EA DICE	SWEDEN
EA TIBURON	USA
EDEN STUDIOS	FRANCE
EIDOS MONTREAL	CANADA
EPIC GAMES	USA
EUROCOM ENTERTAINMENT	UNITED KINGDOM
EXIENT	UNITED KINGDOM
FIREBRAND GAMES	UNITED KINGDOM
FROM SOFTWARE	JAPAN
FRONTIER DEVELOPMENTS	UNITED KINGDOM
GAME FREAK	JAPAN
GEARBOX SOFTWARE	USA
GREZZO	JAPAN
GUERRILLA GAMES	HOLLAND
HARMONIX	USA
HB STUDIOS	CANADA
HEADSTRONG GAMES	UNITED KINGDOM
HEAVY IRON STUDIOS	USA
HIGH MOON STUDIOS	USA
ID SOFTWARE	USA
INFINITY WARD	USA
INSOMNIAC	USA
KAOS STUDIOS	USA
KONAMI DIGITAL ENTERTAINMENT	JAPAN
LAND HO!	JAPAN
LEVEL 5	JAPAN
LIONHEAD STUDIOS	UNITED KINGDOM
MEDIA MOLECULE	UNITED KINGDOM
MONSTER GAMES	USA
NAMCO	JAPAN
NAUGHTY DOG	USA
ND CUBE	JAPAN
NETHERREALM STUDIOS	USA
NINTENDO	JAPAN
OBSIDIAN ENTERTAINMENT	USA
PEOPLE CAN FLY	POLAND
PIPEWORKS	USA
POLYPHONY DIGITAL	JAPAN
RARE	UNITED KINGDOM
RELIC	CANADA
RETRO STUDIOS	USA
ROCKSTAR NORTH	UNITED KINGDOM
ROCKSTAR SAN DIEGO	USA
ROCKSTEADY STUDIOS	UNITED KINGDOM
SEGA	JAPAN
SIDHE	NEW ZEALAND
SLEDGEHAMMER GAMES	USA
SLIGHTLY MAD STUDIOS	UNITED KINGDOM
SONIC TEAM	JAPAN
SPLASH DAMAGE	UNITED KINGDOM
SPORTS INTERACTIVE	UNITED KINGDOM
SQUARE ENIX	JAPAN
SUCKER PUNCH	USA
SUMO DIGITAL	UNITED KINGDOM
TEAM BONDI	AUSTRALIA
TECHLAND	POLAND
THE SIMS STUDIO	USA
THQ SAN DIEGO	USA
TOYS FOR BOB	USA
TRAVELLER'S TALES	UNITED KINGDOM
TREYARCH	USA
TURN 10 STUDIOS	USA
UBISOFT CASABLANCA	MOROCCO
UBISOFT FRANCE	FRANCE
UBISOFT MONTREAL	CANADA
UBISOFT REFLECTIONS	UNITED KINGDOM
VALVE	USA
VISCERAL GAMES	USA
VOLITION	USA
YUKE'S	JAPAN
ZOË MODE	UNITED KINGDOM

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BETA

DEVELOPMENT FEATURES, INTERVIEWS, ESSAYS & MORE

Dare to be Digital in focus
p28

Catching the bug

How did TV celebrity Jonathan Ross get a taste for making games like Catcha Catcha Aliens? We ask the man himself, p18

Restart your career, refuel your studio
p22

Region Focus: Hamburg
p32

The Fame Game

Jonathan Ross is famous across the worlds of television, comics, film and comedy, and now he's trying his hand at games development. **Will Freeman** meets the talk show host turned creative lead, and his team

Left-to-right: HotSauce Interactive's Dominic Clubb, Georg Backer, Jonathan Ross and Harvey Ross

IN THE UK, Jonathan Ross is a superstar. In his 25 years in the media spotlight he has served as a high-profile television talk show host, radio presenter, film critic, comic book writer and comedian.

His celebrity is such that he knows what it is to feel the sharp end of the tabloid press, and yet he remains hugely popular with a public that today know him as a household name of mainstream entertainment.

And as of late last year, the celebrity has a new skill to add to his CV, for Ross now runs his very own games development studio.

Named HotSauce Interactive, the studio is based in the same converted industrial building that also houses part of Ross' television production outfit HotSauce TV. Tucked away in a quaint industrial corner of Camden, North London, it is a building filled with talented staff, big ambitions and boxes of toys. More on that later.

HotSauce Interactive debuted late last year with the launch of its first game, iOS auto-runner *Catcha Catcha Aliens*; a well-polished effort with enough individual mechanics to distinguish it from the genre-dominating giant that is *Temple Run*.

SERIOUS FUN

Spend a few minutes with *Catcha Catcha Aliens*, and its clear HotSauce Interactive is taking making games seriously. It is utterly a commercial release equal to much you'd see from more established iOS studios, and nothing about it suggests it being the product of a vanity project.

Ross is, of course, a famously devoted gamer. He is a collector of old and obscure gaming platforms; evident in the boxes stacked in piles around HotSauce's office space. They contain, along with some of Ross' immense toy collection, the likes of Dreamcast Divers and NeoGeos – hardly the possesions of a reluctant gamer.

> ***"I am confident in my ideas, and if they're wrong I'm happy to accept that. And I think you do need, if you're ostensibly at the top of the team, someone like that."***
>
> Jonathan Ross,
> HotSauce Interactive

In conversation with the broadcaster, all it takes is a single nostalgic sentence about a particular game and Ross shoots off, returning clutching a handful of Famicom Disk System titles, an Atari Lynx, or any other curio from the medium's history.

It's an obsession Ross shares with his family, and it's largely the reason he today finds himself heading up a games studio.

"It comes from us being a family that have always played video games," says Ross of founding HotSauce Interactive. "Then a few times I got asked to do voices on games, and I'd almost always say 'yes', because if something sounds fun, I'm generally up for doing it, and – despite the way the press made me out for several years – I'm not actually that money motivated."

A chance meeting at the 2009 Video Games BAFTA's led to a voice work offer on *Fable III*, where Ross met a number of Lionhead staff and formed a good relationship with Georg Backer, who at the time was audio producer at the studio.

"Jonathan and I talked about games for something like an hour, so I just suggested to him maybe he could think about making games," reveals Backer, who now, like all the staff at HotSauce Interactive, embraces multiple roles at the studio.

And so it was, around May 2011, that together Ross and Backer assembled a team and, many months later, began work on a number of prototypes.

A FRESH START

But why would a man who must have the pick of enough potential projects to fill every hour for decades, and immense success in so

HotSauce's inaugural mobile game Catcha Catcha Aliens is an auto-runner themed around an interplanetary clean up crew (above left)

many other arenas, take on an entirely new career path at the age of 52? In short, when Ross decided against renegotiating his longstanding contract with broadcasting organisation the BBC, he began to look at life a little differently.

"I had a slight reappraisal of my career when the BBC thing happened," explains Ross. "The thing about being at the BBC was that it was great for me, but it was very limiting. You were working so flat out – even though I'm not ever complaining as I was paid handsomely – but I was kind of working six days a week for 44 weeks of the year. It was solid and it was reliable, but in a way it was a little bit boring towards the end, because I knew exactly what I was doing every day for months in advance."

Ross admits that the technical challenge of making games previously prevented him from considering the idea. But in an era of accessible games tools and creatively empowered consumers, he has finally stepped up to involve himself in a medium he has long adored.

LEADER OF THE PACK

Ross' role at the studio is largely as a creative lead. He is joined by four other full-time staff, and employs a number of freelancers. Along with Backer, Dominic Clubb heads up the artistic process, Guy Simmons serves in a project lead role and Ross' son, Harvey Ross, stands as a co-writer and contributor in various other ways. Meanwhile, Ross' film writer wife, Jane Goldman, is also leading a project at the studio, again offering creative input and guidance.

A glance at *Catcha Catcha Aliens*' credits reveals Backer as executive producer of the game, but the HotSauce Interactive staff are typically coy about overemphasising definite individual job titles. In reality, they all contributed across the game, and insist the studio's culture is one of creative democracy.

"The creative culture is great actually," says Simmons of HotSauce Interactive, before drawing a comparison with his previous employers. "It feels a lot like the early days of Bullfrog and Muckyfoot, where everyone had a voice, which is the beauty of small teams really. There's no real hierarchy and you don't need to be loud to be heard, which suits my mouse-like personality perfectly.

"Obviously, the key difference here is that you have Jane Goldman and Jonathan Ross involved too, which adds a new perspective, and brings a refreshingly different comedy and obscure geekery element to the party."

THE OTHER SCREEN

Something else Ross and Goldman contribute is experience from television and the broader entertainment industries. Any observer of the global games development space will have heard the talk of television and games production methods, staffing structures and technologies growing increasingly similar, but for Ross, what he brings is something rather different.

"The one thing I've brought to this is a certain confidence in my ideas, creatively," he reveals. "I am confident in my ideas, and if they're wrong I'm happy to accept that. And I think you do need, if you're ostensibly at the top of the team, someone like that.

"Georg runs the team, but it's very democratic here; everyone is on an equal footing. Nobody says 'you can't fucking do this', or 'you have to do that.' It's much more that we sit down together and form the ideas together, but ultimately you do need someone there who is going to say 'yes' or 'no' to something. I've been doing my own shows for 25 years now, so I've got fairly confident at deciding what works and what doesn't."

Ross modestly claims that that may be the only thing he's brought with him in terms of applicable experience, along with having seen almost every commercially released movie in recent times as a critic, and playing games in high numbers. In other words, he knows how to entertain, and he knows what makes a good narrative of story.

But for Ross, it's a lifelong enthusiasm that really fuels his approach to making games.

"I think my love of comic books might actually inform this process more than anything else I've done," he says.

▶

THINKING BIG

JONATHAN ROSS AND his team at HotSauce Interactive are tremendously ambitious. So far they have one released iOS game to their name, but already they are considering how they could move into triple-A development.

"This is something we would need funding for, but I would love us to make a really big world-building game that would be our *Halo*," says Ross. "Something that would be our *Fable* or our *Black Ops*. Something with a really big team where we make something from nothing.

"And I've got a good idea for it, which I was going to do as a comic book for the year after next."

Ross already has one comic book credit under his belt, having penned *Turf*, a four-part miniseries in 2010.

"I really think it might work as a game. I suppose I shouldn't say more, but yes, I am very serious about it."

Exactly what HotSauce's '*Halo*' is remains unclear, but considering Ross' lifetime of achievements, it's far from impossible that he might make it a reality.

The HotSauce team at work, with a fraction of Jonathan Ross' collection of toys in the background

SEEING STARS

ROSS ISN'T THE only UK celebrity with a taste for making games, and it seems comedians in particular yen for building interactive projects.

The likes of Dara O'Briain and Jason Mansfield are famously proactive gamers, with the latter apparently enamored by Sports Interactive's *Football Manager* series. Now it appears others are starting to conjure up their own game concepts.

"Some people I know from the TV world I might develop games with," reveals Ross, while discussing the people he's invited to be part of his new outfit, HotSauce Interactive.

"Jimmy Carr wants to talk with me about developing a game, and Russell I've been talking to about maybe making a game. That would be when we have to allocate time differently and be more managerial about what we spend our physical resources on."

Presumably, by 'Russell', Ross means his infamous comedian and Hollywood actor friend, Russell Brand. And so, HotSauce Interactive, it seems, may be the place celebrities go to make their games development dreams blossom into reality.

BUILDING UP

At HotSauce Interactive's inception, as work began on *Catcha Catcha Aliens*, Ross and his team also fleshed out another game with a Mexican wrestling theme that came about as a result of his involvement with an East London group called Lucha Britannia.

Meanwhile another title is underway with Goldman at the helm, and the team continually – even obsessively – brainstorm new ideas. At several times during *Develop*'s visit to HotSauce Interactive conversation turns onto an enthusiastic clatter as ideas tumble forth, and Ross seems to envisage ideas for games on a near daily basis.

With that enthusiasm comes ambition *(see panel 'Big Things')*, and HotSauce Interactive has plenty. There's musing about crafting far bigger games, employing more staff, tackling triple-A development and even building a whole new floor for the games team based in the building.

And, all the while, the HotSauce games team are in the unusual position of having a genuine celebrity in control, both creatively and financially.

"We all have a relationship with famous people before we've met them, and then you have to recalibrate your experience until the point where it's no longer a surprise – good or bad – when they walk through the door," says Ross of how his status impacts a process like founding HotSauce Interactive. "That always takes a few weeks to settle down, but now it's totally normal for us all to sit around together like this."

INDEPENDENTLY MINDED

His celebrity has, of course, afforded Ross a level of financial security, and that means, for the foreseeable future, Ross will operate HotSauce Interactive as an indie. It is not supported by any outside funding, despite much interest from investors. Certainly, it's not the kind of indie where a duo of devs work from a parent's garage for pennies, but still, the team behind *Catcha Catcha Aliens* is small, youthful and boasts all of the spirit of an ambitious new microstudio.

> ***"This is something I'm really enjoying. I enjoy doing things where I start from scratch, and you have something at the end of it."***
>
> Jonathan Ross, HotSauce

"It's just us, and that's the way we want it to stay for the foreseeable future," confirms Ross. "That way it's more fun, and we can do what we want. It's the same reasons we haven't ever sold any shares in our television company, even though people have asked over the years, especially as I've had volume work guaranteed, so its an attractive proposition. But why get someone else involved if you don't need them?"

As for the tools at the heart of Ross' studio, it is a familiar combination for a new outfit.

"We're using Unity as our games engine for now, which has been great in terms of prototyping quickly," explains Clubb. "Even an artist like me was coding at the beginning thanks to Unity, and then there's art tools like 3ds Max and Photoshop."

Does that mean Ross is already au fait with the nuances of the Unity editor? Not quite, but while frank about his ambitions as far as getting his hands in the code is concerned, Ross is not opposed to learning more about the finer details of making games.

"I have a minor interest, but not really," he initially says of seriously learning coding. "I mean, I quite like the idea, and I like to think I have some worthwhile input here in terms of design and the look of things.

"I wouldn't mind learning something like Unity, just so I can understand more how the process works, but really I know after that I wouldn't spend much of my time doing that, because there are people here that can do it better than me and faster than me."

Clearly, Ross does know the games development industry, even if he isn't an experienced programmer. One moment he's full of enthusiasm about Valve's creative model, and next he's delivering an informed oration on why the video games industry need not have an inferiority complex about the film business.

Big plans may well be afoot, but for now, however, the team is sticking with smaller games using Unity. And for Ross, his devotion to HotSauce Interactive appears unfaltering.

"This is something I'm really enjoying more and more," he concludes. "I enjoy doing things where I start from scratch, where you have something at the end of it. I loved doing my talk show and I loved doing my film show, and I'm always still doing things like that, juggling ten things at once. That's just how my mind works."

And with that, conversation returns to an energetic ruckus. There's talk of a physics game concept, near shouting about *Vib-Ribbon*, and then it's back to work to make other visions a reality. ■

www.hotsauceinteractive.co.uk

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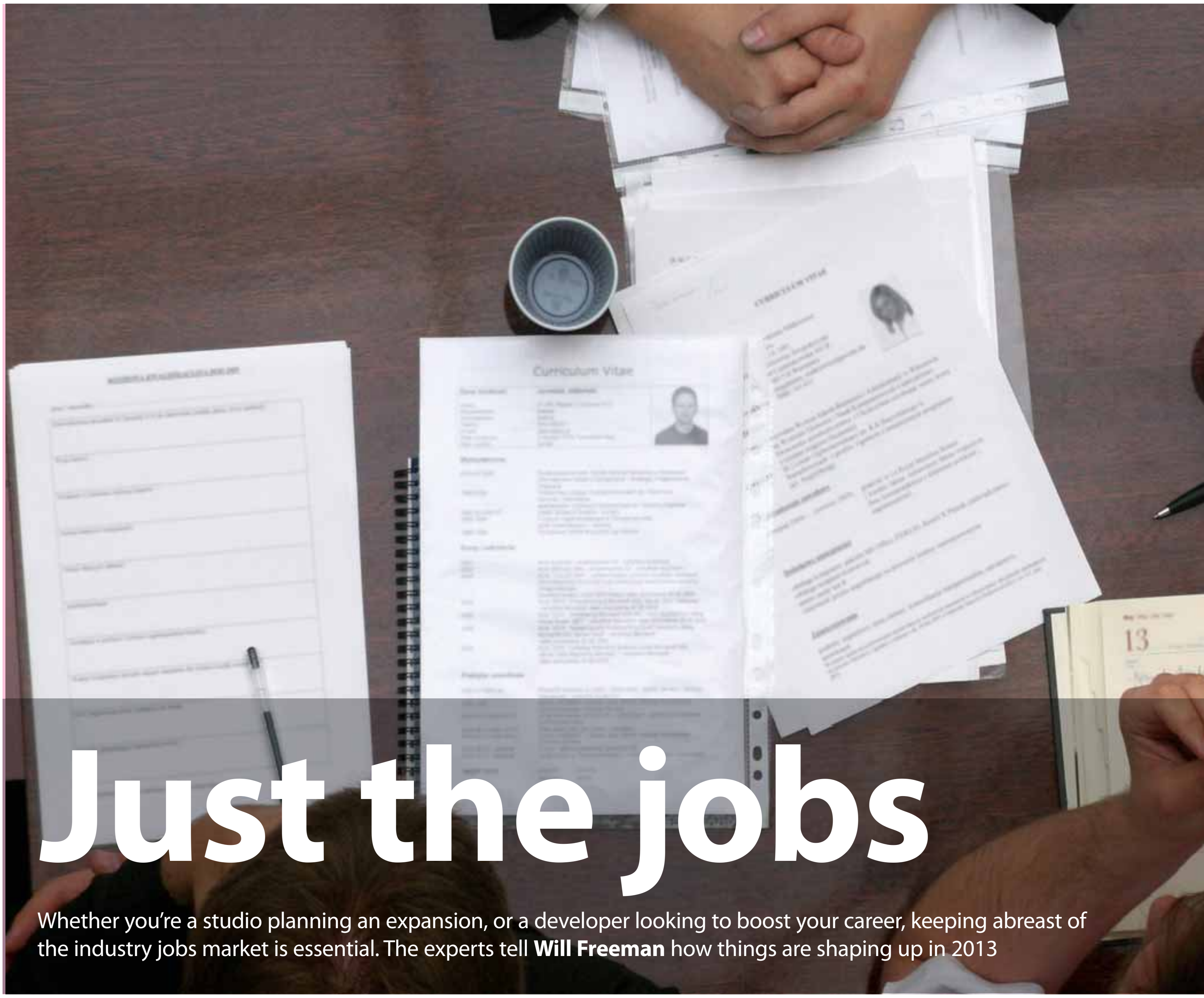

Just the jobs

Whether you're a studio planning an expansion, or a developer looking to boost your career, keeping abreast of the industry jobs market is essential. The experts tell **Will Freeman** how things are shaping up in 2013

The interview process can be a terrifying time for developers of every experience level, but with a bit of advice from our contributors, you could sail through

THE OPENING MONTHS of any year are a tempting time to ramp up your career or bolster a studio with an intake of fresh talent.

But in 2013, as far as the jobs market is concerned, the global games development sector is in perhaps its greatest state of flux yet seen. New studios open while others close on a near daily basis. Development hubs across the world are shifting in status and location. A new console generation is dawning. Tools outfits, publishers, retailers and developers are overlapping their established roles. As much as it's an overused buzzword, the democratisation of games making continues.

As a result of all this, established career paths are increasingly tangled, and all in all, it's a bewildering time.

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

But 2013 is also a period of opportunity, thanks to the very reasons that make recruitment and job-seeking an increasingly multifarious business. Things are tough out there, but the industry headcount is arguably on the up.

"Triple-A closures are creating hubs of activity and microstudios with exceptionally talented, experienced people able to work on their own creative terms on easily accessed platforms," confirms Noel Krohn, director of games and film recruiter MPG Universal, reflecting on the situation. "The bar for entry has been lowered and the whole atmosphere can be likened to the original 8-bit days with the industry coming full circle."

That perspective will sound to many ears like wonderful news – with the era when the NES saved the industry from its most dramatic crash so fondly remembered – but now, as then, challenges abound. Emerging markets like Brazil and the Middle East present new dynamics and potential brain drains, and more than ever before, competition for both jobs and talent is at a high.

"Globally, the sector is expanding and diversifying," says Giselle Stewart, general manager of *Driver: San Francisco* creator Ubisoft Reflections. "Mobile, tablets and digital distribution are broadening the market and there is now more choice than ever for skilled individuals.

"In addition, many countries have recognised that the video games industry is a high skilled, high tech industry of the future, and have therefore sought to stimulate domestic growth through favourable taxation policies, leading to intense global competition."

It's undeniably an exciting and changeable time, but one not without difficulties, for both studios, and the agencies that often provide them with fresh staff.

"There'll be a number of challenges for both sides of the games recruitment coin in 2013, mainly in the form of increased competition," explains Alex Wright-Manning, talent acquisition manager at Sega outfit The Creative Assembly, who suggests studios and recruitment agencies may increasingly work more closely to address such challenges. "As well as competition internally, traditional specialist games agencies are seeing their market share eroded by IT recruiters looking to expand into an exciting and potentially lucrative recruitment sector. It used to be extremely difficult to break into a games studio as a recruiter, but as the war for talent intensifies, studios will be more open to

working with agencies that can provide top candidates, regardless of their specialist area or history."

CONSOLE YOURSELF

But there remains good reason to be optimistic for individuals looking for either a promotion, a new employer or their inauguration in the games industry. The next hardware generation is increasingly the current generation, and backed up by the debut of machines like the Piston 'Steam Box' (*see page 6*), the games business may be poised to enter a new era of great prospects.

"This year could see the launch of future next generation consoles from both Microsoft and Sony, which will require substantial developer backing," says an optimistic Stig Strand, who serves as manager of games at recruiter Amiqus. "This should result in more job openings on high-end future console products taking place globally, therefore making it a perfect time to enter the gaming world."

And in terms of popularity, the games industry is enjoying a phase some are keen to frame as a new golden era, in spite of the challenges. Whether that's a reality, certainly a career making games is increasingly tempting youngsters, resulting in a remarkably competitive space around entry-level positions.

> ***"The next generation should result in more job openings on high-end future console products taking place globally."***
>
> Stig Strand, Amiqus

"What we are experiencing at the moment is a large number of young people who want to join the industry," explains Crytek's talent manager Tatiana Hoejengaard. "We receive a huge amount of applications for QA, community management, sound design, game and level designers, animators, project managers and producers. The most difficult vacancies to fill are usually programmers, senior environment artists, and the roles in cinematics, engine and R&D departments."

By Hoejengaard's analysis, there are roles to be filled, meaning even if applicant numbers are sky-high, those with the right ambitions have a good chance of finding work.

EXPANDED HORIZONS

Meanwhile, others highlight that now more than ever, it isn't just the role a jobseeker targets that increases their chances of securing employment, but a willingness to take their hunt for work far from home.

"There aren't enough candidates that are mobile," reveals Kim Parker Adcock, MD of games recruiter OPM. "The games industry is incredibly niche, and the chances of candidates finding the right studio with the right game and the right job title at the right price is very unlikely. The more open a candidate is to relocation, the higher the chances of finding the right project for them."

Parker Adcock also echoes Hoejengaard's suggestion that programming positions remain among the toughest to fill, and the two are not alone in that opinion. However, where a particular effort is needed is in creating an ecosystem to attract those with skills not typically associated with games making.

"I foresee a massive increase in demand for specialist skills that you wouldn't normally attribute to the traditional games industry, such as data architects and scientists, business intelligence analysts and online services developers – all the sorts of roles we would normally find outside of the industry," states The Creative Assembly's Wright-Manning. "In order to hire in these growth areas, we'll have to work hard to attract candidates that wouldn't normally consider games a viable career path."

And so it is that most agree the number of vacancies has climbed in the past year, even if it is equally the case that the volume of applicants directing CVs to the games business is also increasing. As for 2013, it appears that trend is set to amplify.

"The number of vacancies will increase over the next 12 months," offers Amiqus' Strand. "It's key for the launch and survival of future platforms to have developer backing, so there will surely be an uplift and desire to hire experienced staff as well as talented juniors to accommodate the larger pipelines required to make a future console product."

Strand also predicts that the continual growth of the social and mobile gaming sector – in tandem with the unprecedented numbers of start-ups opening their doors – will establish even more avenues to work in games.

CAREERS ADVICE

Fortunately, for studios looking to employ staff in this changing business, there's a wealth of advice available (*see panel 'Ramping Up'*). But what about the individuals looking to increase their prospects as they apply for new jobs? Fortunately, studios and recruiters alike are keen to share their tips on making the grade.

"When applying, ensure you send a short, relevant CV, along with targeted work samples that make it easy for people to see what you are capable of," suggests ▶

Working for workers (top-to-bottom): Eamonn Mgherbi of Avatar Games Recruitment, Ubisoft Reflections' Giselle Stewart, Crytek's Mariele Weber, and Stig Strand from Amiqus.

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REFLECTIONS
A UBISOFT STUDIO

Reflection's Stewart. "Make sure you tailor your application to the job and company you are applying to, show an interest and understanding of that company and explain why you are the right person for the role."

"Before sending out your application to any game company, do your research as thoroughly as you can," adds Crytek's HR manager Mariele Weber on a similar note, who believes that the better a jobseeker understands the company in question, the more chances they will have to secure work.

"Write a cover letter, no more than one page long, explaining who you are and why you have chosen Crytek," she adds with reference to her own employer. "Make sure your portfolio is up to date, is easy to access and browse, and showcases your best work."

Meanwhile, for those seeking their first role in the games sector, it is important to do your research, claims Eamonn Mgherbi, business development director at games recruiter Avatar.

"If you are just starting out in the industry then you have to be up to date with everything that's going on, such as the latest jobs, new trends and what companies are looking for in a new recruit," he advises. "And if you're aiming to become something specific, such as a character artist, then make sure you have a strong, up to date show reel containing various types of realistic characters."

Amiqus' Peter Leonard, principal consultant for social and mobile, meanwhile, reminds job hunters that they should also consider freelance work.

"There are some small – sub-ten people – studios that can utilise the skills of talented developers, but may not have the funds to offer permanent employment," he advises. Talk to these companies to see if you can create freelance work for them, or perhaps even offer temporary services for free to get experience under your belt."

The last tip for developers looking for a new role comes from OPM's Parker Adcock, who asserts that being clear about what field an applicant wants to work in is essential.

"Be professional in your approach and highlight how your skills are relevant to that role. If you do not have commercial experience in a particular area, work on a personal project relevant to games to show that you have those skills."

"If you know you're good don't give up applying. 'No' is only a 'no' today," she continues. "Social networking in related forums – for example for artists at www.cgsociety.org, and on LinkedIn – are also great ways to get noticed. They do say it's not what you know, but who you know."

A POSITIVE OUTLOOK

Overall, there is a wave of optimism from studios and recruiters alike about the state of the games jobs market. Studios have an abundance of enthusiastic applicants to choose from, and jobseekers have an increasingly numerous selection of roles to chase. As a result, the sector is increasingly competitive, but as George Bray, head of technology on games at MPG Universal, says, today is a time of opportunity.

"It feels like the birth of gaming again, with so many new studios opening up globally, either from unfortunate lay offs, or the current generation wanting to make their mark with their ambitions and ideas," concludes Bray. "Exciting times lie ahead." ■

COURSE FOR CONCERN?

GAMES EDUCATION IS one of the key providers of potential recruits for any studio, but in 2013, as ever, the worth of such courses are a contentious issue.

However, according to Giselle Stewart, general manager of Ubisoft Reflections, increasingly the number of high quality courses for future games makers is on the rise.

"There is now a raft of different courses aimed specifically at the disciplines within games development, and in our experience, some of these courses are very good," she says. "Things to look for are to ensure that the university has strong relationships with high quality games studios, and a good track record of producing graduates that are 'industry ready' and have secured jobs in the industry post-graduation.

"You see that a lot of the universities and developers are now working more closely together to get the quality of the students better," adds Ian Goodall, MD of recruiter Aardvark Swift, who sees a definite increase in the quality of today's games educators.

"They are better now than what they were four or five years ago," he continues. "I'd encourage developers, if they have a dim view of universities, to be a bit open-minded to having another look, because it's got much better."

RAMPING UP

Is your studio looking to increase its headcount? Industry experts offer advice on how to do it right, whatever your outfit's size

"It should be done slowly. Making games is a team effort, and you want people to work well together. You want a group of people who challenge, respect and understand each other. It takes time for the new recruits to find their place in the team."

Tatiana Hoejengaard
Talent Manager,
Crytek

"Tapping previously inaccessible territories, offering sizeable relocation payments and extra benefits, attractive referral schemes for our staff and development of relationships with schools and universities is important."

Alex Wright-Manning
Talent Acquisition Manager,
The Creative Assembly

"Look to grow organically based upon success of previous projects, profitability and making some steady and effective headway, until understanding where the market will be in six-to-12 months. And staff up – or stay steady – accordingly."

Peter Leonard
Principal Consultant, Social and Mobile,
Amiqus

"Growth in a games studio is an area that can be hard to manage. With most things, communication is key, let your current staff know the benefits of this growth. For example, security in the knowledge that the company can create more IP or take on more projects giving it more financial stability long term."

Noel Krohn
Director, MPG Universal

"Write a pessimistic business plan and cash flow forecast. Don't hire somebody key without informing the team, asking for their input and asking for internal applications. Make sure you write comprehensive job and person specs."

Kim Parker Adcock
Managing Director,
OPM

"Get organised. Sit down and decide what it is you need, and if you definitely need it, because today it is really a very, very tough market to go and find talent in. And get yourself in a position where you can actually make offers and get contracts to people. "

Ian Goodall
Managing Director,
Aardvark Swift

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Salary Survey

Hundreds of developers from across the world contributed to this year's Salary Survey. We've digested the data, done the maths, and analysed the reality behind the figures. Here's what we found out

AVERAGE GLOBAL GAMES DEVELOPER YEARLY SALARY:

£34,183

THIS YEAR, OUR Salary Survey shows a tiny decline in the average UK games industry yearly wage.

Last year we calculated the number at exactly £34,457.

The fall seems to come from some depressions in the UK job market, where most of our respondents come from. When we looked at just the UK number, the average salary sinks to £29,358, a difference of over £4,000.

Consolidation as experienced professionals moved roles, and a raft of new, but much smaller indie studios appeared, has pulled this number down. There are also significant wider trends in the games industry at the moment which have impacted the jobs market, with a bit less retail staff at all levels, from shop floor to head office, less mid-level execs in traditional games publishing. And that new wave of UK indie developers, will inevitably report lower salaries. Some contributors to the survey say that a number of discreet redundancies and job changes in the industry have, combined with other consolidation, contributed to a lower number of managers and senior staff at some levels.

Some information on our survey's methodology: throughout December and January we asked readers of *Develop* and sister magazine *MCV* to fill out an online survey. 763 people globally took part (fewer than last year), but 510 were from the UK (a similar number to 2012).

We've calculated the result above on these pages as a median average, rather than a mean average. A mean average would otherwise distort the numbers by including a group of very senior contributors who have kindly taken part to help form data in higher tiers. With those well-paid execs included, the average jumps up to £36,523, but that's also down on last year's tally of £37,407.

Take into account all the answers from games industry personnel from around the world and the median average is £32,008 – that's also a decline on last year (£34,263), but not the lowest global figure we have calculated (2011's, which was £28,932).

So, in total, despite the clear declines in average salaries for games developers, the games development sector's overall wage trends are at present ahead of the total industry standard. ■

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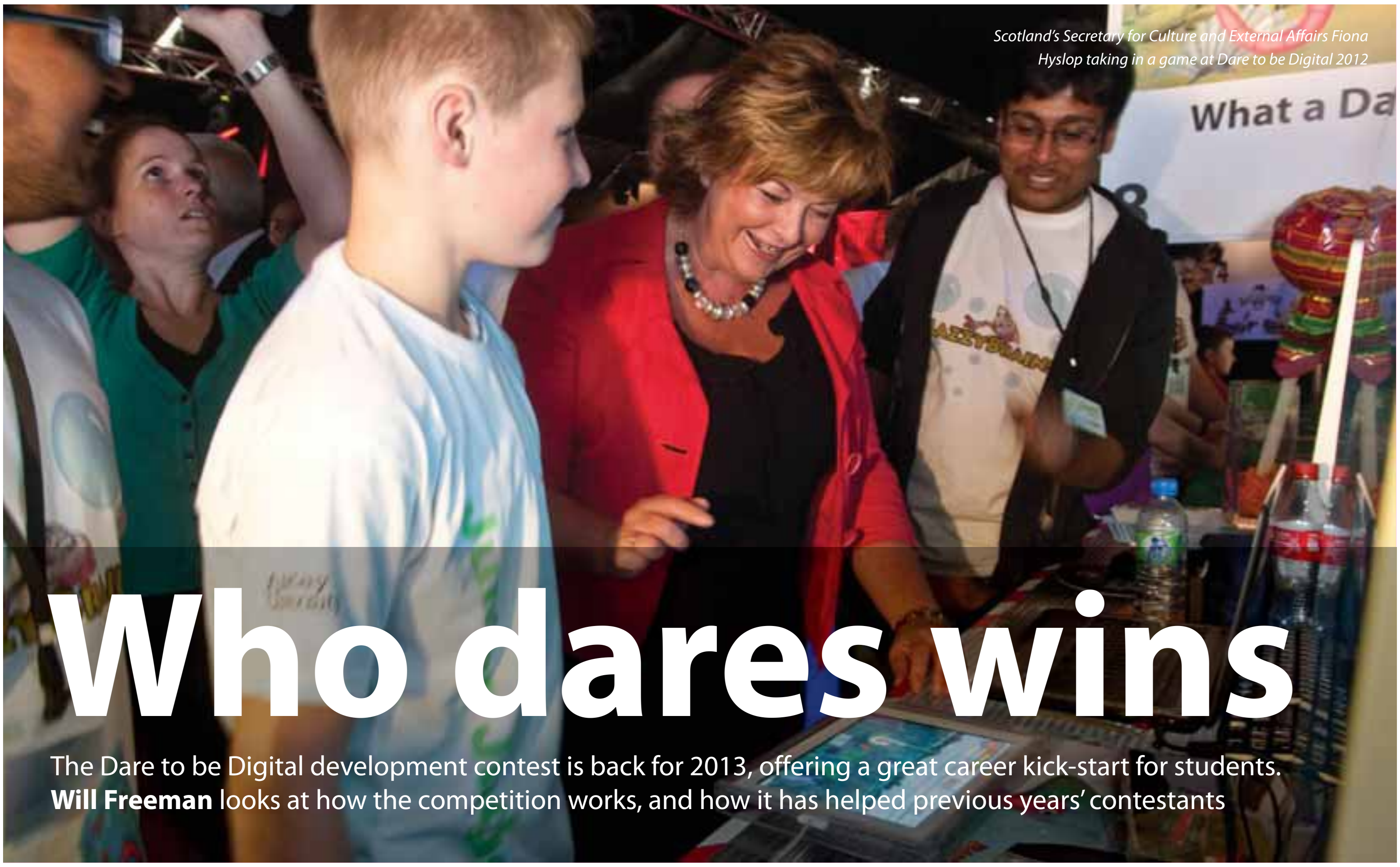
	UK AVERAGE	GLOBAL AVERAGE
ART		
Lead Artist	£37,500 p.a.	£36,875 p.a.
Artist	£30,000 p.a.	£31,685 p.a.
Junior Artist	£18,928 p.a.	£18,125 p.a.
CODING		
Lead Programmer	£46,538 p.a.	£49,052 p.a.
Programmer	£30,961 p.a.	£35,027 p.a.
Junior Programmer	£23,000 p.a.	£19,722 p.a.
AUDIO		
Lead Audio	£47,500 p.a.	£54,000 p.a.
Entry Level Audio Role	£24,166 p.a.	£25,000 p.a.
PRODUCTION		
Lead Producer	£47,500 p.a.	£51,029 p.a.
Producer	£32,500 p.a.	£31,048 p.a.
Senior Producer (External/Publisher-employed)	£47,500 p.a.	£46,500 p.a.
Junior Producer (External/Publisher-employed)	£27,500 p.a.	£30,500 p.a.
DESIGN		
Lead Designer	£43,653 p.a.	£38,676 p.a.
Designer	£26,602 p.a.	£26,563 p.a.
Junior Designer	£18,928 p.a.	£19,167 p.a.
WRITING/NARRATIVE DESIGN		
Senior Writer	£35,833 p.a.	Not enough data
Junior Writer	£18,750 p.a.	Not enough data
STUDIO MANAGEMENT		
Junior/Smaller Studio Biz Dev	£27,500 p.a.	£29,166 p.a.
Senior Biz Dev	Not enough data	£40,000 p.a.
Creative Director	£51,676 p.a.	£57,500 p.a.
MD/Studio Head (Junior)	£34,166 p.a.	£49,772 p.a.
MD/Studio Head (Senior/8 years+ experience)	£60,500 p.a.	£81,250 p.a.

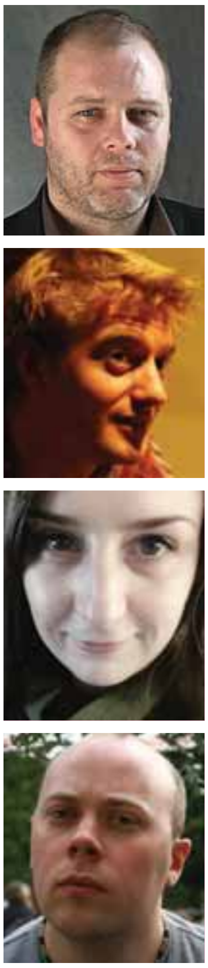
UK REGIONAL BREAKDOWN	
Scotland	£29,625 p.a.
North East	£25,096 p.a.
North West	£28,688 p.a.
Yorkshire/Humberside	£26,136 p.a.
West Midlands	£29,955 p.a.
East Midlands	£29,792 p.a.
East England	£26,999 p.a.
South West	£23,182 p.a.
South East	£33,603 p.a.
London	£37,222 p.a.



Scotland's Secretary for Culture and External Affairs Fiona Hyslop taking in a game at Dare to be Digital 2012

Who dares wins

The Dare to be Digital development contest is back for 2013, offering a great career kick-start for students. **Will Freeman** looks at how the competition works, and how it has helped previous years' contestants



Top-to-bottom: Dare director Gregor White, and former entrants Jack Potter, Claire Moncrieff and Thomas Laird

THE IMPACT OF the Dare to be Digital games development contest can arguably be felt across the UK and around the world. And with the application process for the 2013 iteration recently opened, there's a new opportunity to take part.

Those tempted should consider this: entrants and winners from previous years occupy desks at established dev giants and ambitious start-ups. What's more, those who have passed through the competition come from across the globe, and have gained exposure throughout the industry.

Dare to be Digital is open to student developers, who, in teams of five, descend on Scotland's Abertay University for nine weeks, from June to August, to develop a prototype video game, receiving mentoring from a range of industry experts. Expenses are paid, along with a stipend, and residence is supplied for the duration.

SHOWTIME

With the games completed, they are displayed to the public and a panel of industry judges at the Dare ProtoPlay event, attended by some 10,000 visitors. As ProtoPlay concludes, three winners are chosen, rewarded for their titles' innovation and creativity, market potential and use of tech. A substantial £2,500 prize is presented to each team, yet the cash is but the icing on the cake.

That's because seven months later, the three winning teams can enjoy the chance to attend the BAFTA Video Games Awards to compete for the coveted Ones to Watch award. One will walk away with a bona fide BAFTA.

To describe that ultimate prize as a debut worth striving for is certainly something of an understatement.

Clearly, there are a wealth of other contests out there, but according to Dare to be Digital's organisers, their event offers something special.

"Dare to be Digital is a really unique way of getting into the games industry – one which has launched hundreds and hundreds of careers with some of the biggest games companies in the world," offers Gregor White, director of the competition.

> ***"Dare to be Digital was critical for me breaking into the games industry. We were being fought over by various companies."***
>
> Jack Potter, Ubisoft

"Everyone who takes part in Dare improves their skills immeasurably – there simply isn't another way of learning so much, and making so many industry contacts, in nine weeks," he later adds.

It's a chance to create games in a setting that accurately apes the professional process, make contacts, bolster a CV and, for many, kick-start a career. If you still need convincing, consider the careers of Jack Potter, technical lead at Ubisoft, Claire Moncrieff, 2D artist at Crytek UK, and Tom laird, map support artist at Rockstar North, all of whom spent time on Dare to be Digital teams in previous years.

"Dare to be Digital was critical for me breaking into the games industry," explains Potter. "Since no one in our team took a games specific course, we really had no understanding of how the games industry itself works, and we certainly didn't have any industry contacts. But by the end of the ten week contest we were being fought over by various UK games companies."

"Not only does it give you invaluable experience in working together as a group and help understand the needs and motivations of others around you, it's great for prospective employers who understand what Dare is about," offers Moncrieff.

TIPPING POINT

And Laird has some tips for potential candidates, based on his time with Dare.

"Don't just tailor your game to kids," he advises. "There are more adults than kids at ProtoPlay. Stand out in the application process by doing something unique, fresh and challenging, but make sure you can demonstrate that you'll be capable of achieving the goals you outline. Use everything at your disposal to stand out."

All in all, it appears to be an incredible opportunity for all involved.

If you're looking to learn more and submit your application, head over to: **www.daretobedigital.com**

DARE: THE DATES

- **Application deadline** – April 9th
- **Online judging** – April 15th to 21st
- **Interviews for entrants** – April 29th to May 9th
- **IT requirement submission** – May 24th
- **Dare starts** – June 10th
- **Dare ProtoPlay** – August 8th to 11th

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GEORGE CLAPPERTON

Community Manager
From Manchester
At Goodgame Studios since 07/2012

The atmosphere here is amazing. From the moment I walked into the company I could feel that it was a fun place to be. Everyone is really friendly and it's more like you are with a group of friends rather than work colleagues. Everybody loves what they are doing and is focused on making a real impact. This just makes Goodgame Studios a great place to work.

LAP PUN CHEUNG

Concept Artist
From Leeds
At Goodgame Studios since 06/2012

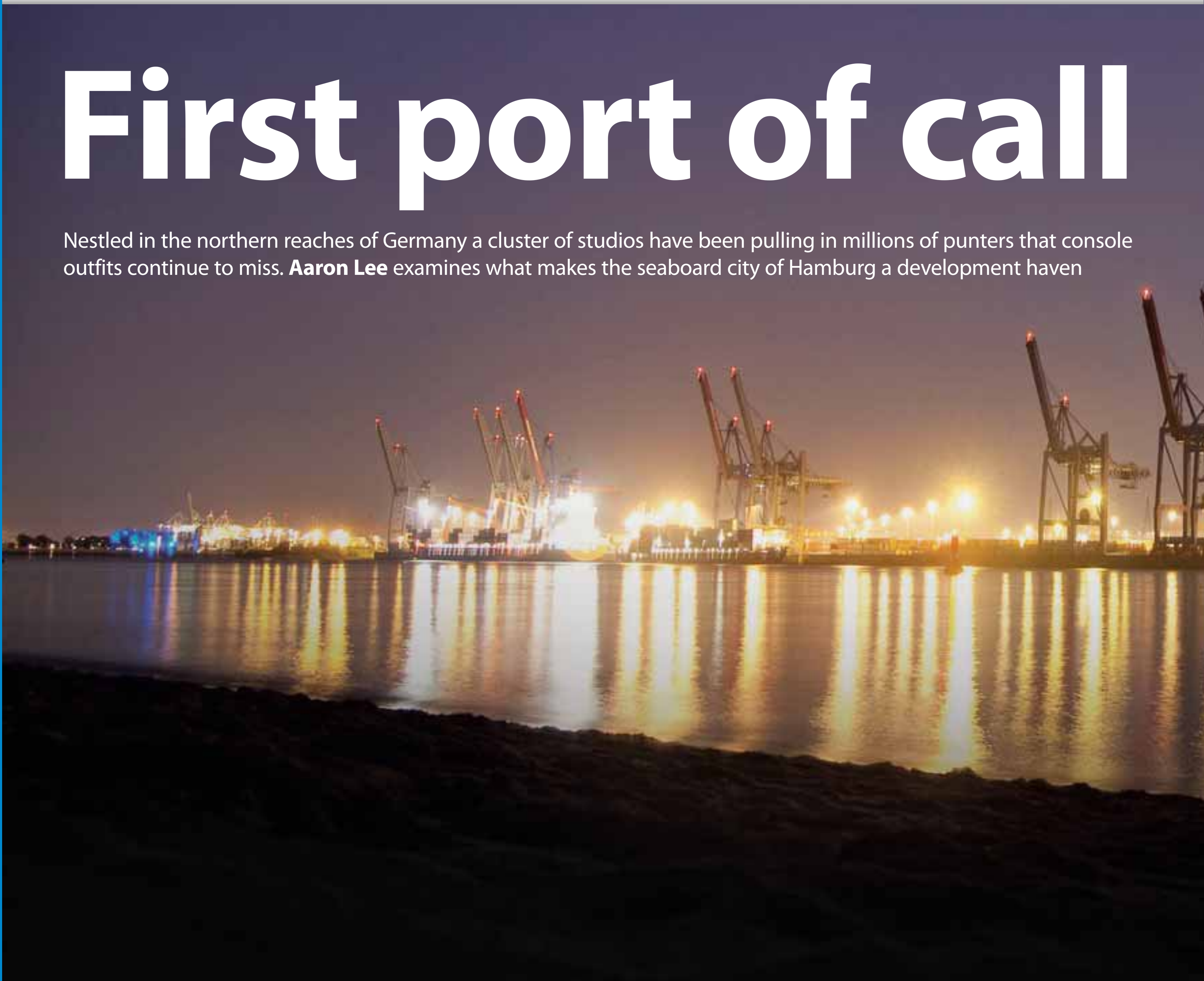
Working at Goodgame Studios is great fun. It's a relaxed workplace where, as a concept artist, I get to work on cool new projects. We get free cereal during the day, free beer in the evening, a cafeteria with table football and a PS3 and occasionally there are also fun company events. As the company grows I'm sure even more amazing things will be happening.

DAVID NORTH

Vector Artist
From Leeds
At Goodgame Studios since 05/2012

Goodgame was quick to reply to my job application and I'm grateful for the opportunities given to me. I've never worked in such a large company before, and was pleasantly surprised by the relaxed working environment.

GOODGAME STUDIOS



First port of call

Nestled in the northern reaches of Germany a cluster of studios have been pulling in millions of punters that console outfits continue to miss. **Aaron Lee** examines what makes the seaboard city of Hamburg a development haven

Gamecity Hamburg's Achim Quinke (top) and Alexander Goldybin of iLogos (bottom)

IN A BUSTLING port city in Western Europe a revolution is happening. The products are digital and the brands largely unknown – at least to English-speaking audiences. But the growth they've spurred is real.

This is Hamburg, one of Germany's most densely populated areas, where games companies are generating the kind of growth that prompts even the most disinterested of politicians and critics to sit up and take notice.

More than 150 development studios and games-related companies have set up shop in the region, which is already famed as Germany's media and banking core. By mid 2013, the games sector in Hamburg is expected to account for 4,500 jobs.

Dubbed the "harbour of the games industry", Hamburg is home to developers such as Goodgame Studios, Fishlabs and Xyrality. They've made their mark in online and social with the very games that have been subject to derision for years. Whether you accept the products they make or not, it is the infrastructure behind this explosion that makes it all the more curious.

"It's funny because free-to-play and browser games development has been smiled at for such a long time, while the British games industry – developing mainly console titles with triple-A budgets – has been considered the poster child of European games development," says Marius Follert, CEO of Farbflut Entertainment. "Through the rise of connected devices and the acceptance of free-to-play in the West, this alleged handicap is now turning out to be a big plus in terms of experience and player base in the face of change that this industry is going through."

Farbfurt is behind the offbeat free-to-play games *Dossergame* and *Knastvögel*, titles that have attracted millions of users, primarily from German-speaking countries. And it's not alone. Many of Hamburg's studios have ploughed their resources into browser games and free-to-play development, with surprising success.

"Hamburg is definitely the capital city of browser games," says Goodgame COO and co-founder Christian Wawrzinek, whose company has built a successful business on online games.

Goodgame's empire of free games are all about wish fulfilment. Command a starship, become a gang leader in a bid to control the streets, get your hands dirty rearing chickens and milking cows on a farm of your very own – the list goes on.

Such titles hail from well-trodden genres, such as role-playing and time management, but their component parts serve to create an experience that has attracted over 100 million registered users.

ALL FOR ONE

Almost all of Hamburg's developers paint *Develop* a similar picture when it comes to their games. It's no exaggeration to say that the city has browser games running through its veins as freely as the tributaries of the River Elbe, which snakes its way through the heart of Hamburg. Of course, there's no shortage of browser games online covering all manner of popular fantasies and themes.

When another fifty companies on your own doorstep are producing similar kinds of experiences for players, you'd think friction would start. That's not the case, thanks to the

The coastal city of Hamburg has a huge draw for young people, say local employers in the games business. Scenic images for this piece provided by www.mediaserver.hamburg.de. Photo: Sven Schwarze

ecosystem and support network that has been establish in the city.

Much of the credit for this goes to Gamecity Hamburg, the trade body responsible for nurturing and promoting the city's developers and service providers.

"Gamecity Hamburg specifically is a great support for the gaming industry in our area," agrees InnoGames CEO Hendrick Klindworth. "They arrange bi-monthly parties for all in the industry, which is a great way to network. They also frequently host HR events in the city and in surrounding countries to support our hiring goals. And they work closely with the local government to champion our issues."

Goodgame's Wawrzinek is equally supportive: "The local firms all form a well-connected network. With Gamecity Hamburg, we have one of the best gaming networks in the world. The initiative provides an exchange of knowledge between the companies, promotes the training of young specialists by introducing gaming studies into the university curriculum and facilitates the recruitment of professionals from all across Europe."

Achim Quinke is the architect behind Gamecity Hamburg, as well the city's dedicated jobs portal, Games-Career.com. The organisation, which celebrates its tenth year in operation during 2013, prides itself on listening to the needs of developers. That, claims its team, is how initiatives like recruitment tours to neighbouring European universities were initiated. As a result of its actions Gamecity Hamburg has accumulated an impressive 2,000 individual members across Germany – although studios themselves cannot be single members.

> ***"Mainstream media and many cultural institutions are based here. That's what attracted the gaming industry to Hamburg."***
>
> Felix Faber, Bytro Labs

HOME FROM HOME

Hamburg is also a home for the founders of Xyrality, InnoGames and Farbflut. but for others, it was the city's reputation for media and finance that drew them to it.

Bytro Labs is one such company, as managing director Felix Faber explains: "The company was founded in Freiburg but when we started growing it became harder to find qualified employees there, so we decided to move to a bigger city. Hamburg was our first choice due to the big gaming community and the networking possibilities."

Faber continues: "Hamburg has always been a city that has attracted creative and innovative people. Mainstream media as well as many cultural institutions are based here. That's what attracted the gaming industry to Hamburg in the first place. The creation of networks and the many possibilities to connect with others from the industry is what makes Hamburg unique. And the more gaming companies move here, the more attractive it becomes."

While Gamecity Hamburg received lots of positive name checks, some companies

▶

Christian Wawrzinek of Goodgame Studios (top) and Felix Faber from Bytro Labs (bottom)

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Hamburg's port area offers a bustling atmosphere attractive to many looking for a job in a vibrant city (Photo: Thomas Hampel)

were far less impressed with the lack of support from national government.

Wawrzinek says that such support "limps behind" that of other nations, and describes it as incomparable to the UK. Tax breaks for games developers don't exist, he says.

Follert agrees: "In terms of financial support, Hamburg or Germany in general could do more to support new studios. The support pales in comparison to what Scandinavian countries invest in this sector, for example."

CASH CAPITAL

Moving on from politics, a number of firms were drawn to Hamburg because of its advertising and investment opportunities.

The high number of developers that have adopted the free-to-play business model has helped to attract a group of support companies that provide an essential symbiosis in the city.

Among these organisations are Game Ad Net, TrafficCaptain, Atlas Interactive and Elblabs. Each of these companies concentrates its efforts on driving traffic to browser game sites, attracting advertisers or creating new revenue streams, which are a necessity for games which really on advertising or the sale of premium content.

For example, Game Ad Net specialises in monetising browser and mobile games, with particular focus on getting non-paying gamers to part with their cash. And TrafficCaptain works to generate traffic for online and mobile content companies, offering performance-based campaigns and consulting services for the implementation of Google AdWords.

And it was opportunities in the development space as well the services that support it which led venture capital firm iVentureCapital to invest in three Hamburg-based companies, the previously mentioned Farbflut and TrafficCaptian, as well as MobileBits.

> ***"Hamburg is the most exciting city in Germany, and that is why a lot of talent is considering moving to Hamburg."***
>
> Michael Reul, iVentureCapital

"Berlin is known for its vibrant start-up scene, but when it comes to successful ideas in the long-term, it seems that Hamburg-based companies have a better track record," says iVentureCapital co-founder and CEO Michael Reul. "For me, Hamburg is the most exciting and beautiful city in Germany and that is why a lot of talent is considering moving to Hamburg."

Hamburg has vocal support. But what of Berlin? The German capital, home to social games developer Wooga and a host of tech start-ups, has been lauded as Germany's next bastion of games development. Companies including Unity, Google and Mozilla have set up offices in the city in the last 12 months, with others eying it closely.

Wawrzinek is unrepentant: "With the quality of the local gaming companies, Hamburg can easily compete with Berlin, the hyped Mecca of internet start-ups."

Fishlabs marketing director Kai Hitzer adds that Hamburg's industry culture of regular meet-ups makes "it feel more as if you're talking to a peer than a competitor".

iLogos Europe co-founder and CEO Alexander Goldybin is equally as devoted to the city: "The greatest strength is the people working in the industry in Hamburg. They are what makes making games such a thrilling and often fun endeavour. The mentality of the trade hub makes it easy to bridge cultural differences, and creates a multicultural working space that offers a home for all sorts of international talent."

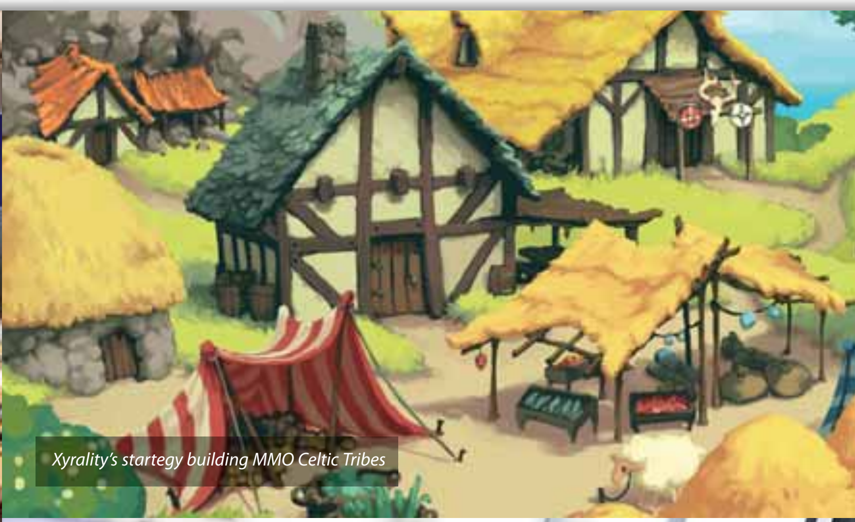
EARLY RISERS

A healthy support network and supportive local investors gives the city's developers a sturdy launch pad, but Gamecity Hamburg's Quinke also believes it's quick-wittedness that got them where they are today.

▶

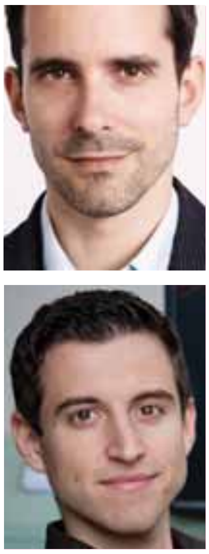
Hendrik Klindworth of InnoGames (top), and Synthesis Germany's Jan Werkmeister (bottom.

Goodgame's studio, like so many in Hamburg, focuses on social gaming


Xyrality's startegy building MMO Celtic Tribes

A view of one of Synthesis' sound booths, from the engineer's side of the glass

An InnoGames developer hard at work in the studio


Fishlab's Kai Hitzer (top), and Marius Follert of Farbfurt (bottom)

"Hamburg-based developers are successful because of their early move to free-to-play games instead of developing expensive console games with high financial risks," he says.

Follert, who's employer has been making free-to-play titles for nearly five years, agrees.

"Many studios from Hamburg found success in the free-to-play realm long before social gaming took off and studios in other Western markets really started to take it seriously," Follert claims.

InnoGames is among the studios that have benefited from this first mover advantage. Brothers Eike and Hendrik Klindworth created the free-to-play title *Tribal Wars* in 2003. What started out as a hobby rapidly snowballed into a full-time occupation. Since founding InnoGames in early 2007, the company now has about 220 staff, and its games, which also include *Grepolis*, *The West* and *Forge of Empires*, boast over 80 million registered users.

"InnoGames differentiates itself from many other online gaming companies by putting a lot of care into a small amount of titles," says Klindworth. "We put an extremely high priority on quality."

MOBILE GETS MIGHTY

Being first to the new pastures of the online space has meant many of Hamburg's developers have flourished at a time when console development has become increasingly risky.

But as consumers moved in greater numbers to mobile platforms, desktop and browser games makers cannot afford to stand still. Hamburg's developers appear to be staying one step ahead of the competition once again. Many of those same early movers that have hit big in the browser space have been making the switch to the mobile market.

For mobile specialist Fishlabs, the arrival of smartphones has given them the platform to shine.

> ***"Our business had often been rather tough in the Java days, but it really took off three-to-four years ago, with the iPhone."***
>
> Kai Hitzer, Fishlabs

"We've been up to our tricks since 2004 and, in the eight years of our existence, we have constantly pushed the envelope in order to bring console-quality gaming experiences to the hottest mobile devices on the market," says Hitzer. "While our business had often been rather tough in the Java days, it really took off three-to-four years ago, when the iPhone got introduced and the App Store got opened. From that moment on, we finally had the right hardware and the right ecosystem to produce exactly the kind of games we always wanted to make. And our passion and endurance ultimately paid off. Today, our flagship title *Galaxy on Fire 2* HD is considered a true ambassador for triple-A gaming on smartphones and tablets."

'Free-to-play' and 'mobile' are the buzzwords of the moment, but the recipe for sustained success is about more than that. Hitzer continues: "If you take just one of them, you might already be on the right track. But if you embrace both of them, you've got a good chance to make it big. Just look at the recent success stories of *CSR Racing* or *Clash of Clans*. If you do it right, such titles can go straight through the roof.

"That's something that even a premium developer such as us has noticed – despite the fact that it is not 100 per cent consistent with our pay-to-play business model. Hence, we've been doing quite a lot of research in the field of alternative payment models in the last couple of months"

That's also what dedicated mobile developer Xyrality has been doing. Founded in late 2010 and home to 50 employees, it creates strategy and role-playing MMOs for mobiles, such as the beautifully designed *Lords & Knights*.

"We focus on iOS and Android applications but are also offering browser clients in the ▶

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Photo: Ottmar Heinze

Hamburg's industrial heritage (main image) has granted the city a sturdy foundation for games company's like iVentureCapital, which is headed up by Michael Reul (above)

context of our cross-platform concepts that bring players from all devices together in one game world," explains co-founder and co-CEO Sven Ossenbrüggen.

InnoGames see the future in the same way, as it plans to launch two cross-platform titles in 2013.

Additonally, Goldybin says this need from his clients has led his production and creative services outfit, iLogos, to step up its technology when it comes to cross-platform development.

"The boom of mobile-based games definitely cannot be ignored. With Android gaining, it has become more and more important for us as an independent developer to offer our clients true cross-platform and multi-platform solutions for their games," insists Goldybin.

"With the rise of mobile gaming, cross-platform development is something that many developers need to tackle and that is something the studios here have yet to master, too," says Follert, who adds that there needs to be considerable growth in order to address the challenges that cross-platform development presents to studios.

TROUBLE TOWN

However, there may well be rough seas ahead in the bay of free-to-play.

Despite Germany having the highest GDP in Europe – $3.5 trillion in 2011, according to the IMF – the ongoing financial crisis across the European continent may threaten jobs in the sector.

Ossenbrüggen is pragmatic: "As with most other industries, the games business does feel the crisis; but in some sectors – such as iOS and Android – the growth of the market overcompensates for the crisis' negative effects. With the variety of different studios and approaches here in Hamburg, there are always companies that can sustain their growth, while others might feel more pressure."

> ***"With the variety of different studios here in Hamburg, there are always companies that can sustain their growth."***
>
> Sven Ossenbrüggen, Xyrality

Goldybin believes the Eurozone crisis may have a negative effect on the earnings of established companies, but expects it to free up potential talent to start-up their own new gaming businesses.

Looking more broadly, Wawrzinek says it will be these young companies that are most at risk: "The users of browser games have become more demanding. Consequently, the development of new titles has become more complex and more expensive. This translates as a requirement for even more qualified staff and even more money. Ultimately, companies less attractive and, most importantly, less profitable than ours have difficulty establishing themselves in the market."

On the other hand, a number of companies hold the view that the Eurozone crisis has had no affect on them, and that they will continue to sustain their growth.

The region's most immediate threat, says Follert, is adapting to the ever-changing online games market, as recent events have brought cracks to the surface.

In October 2012, Bigpoint, one of the city's most accomplished developers, closed its San Francisco office and let go of 120 staff. The reason, said its founder and CEO Heiko Hubertz, was that the games it had developed hadn't been that successful, and in the highly competitive US market that proved terminal.

Only a few months before, Bigpoint ditched its mobile business plans, stating that it was not the right time to be in mobile because of the difficulty of generating revenue.

These events, along with Zynga's sinking fortunes, have been interpreted as a sign that the free-to-play business model is in trouble.

Even just the perceived threat of the free-to-play model deflating risks starting

trouble for Hamburg's developers, which rely so staunchly on the model.

Follert is surprisingly frank: "The success of free-to-play online games and the predominance of local game studios developing for this genre is the main driver for the jobs growth in Hamburg. But despite all the hype around the business model and all these numbers for open positions in Hamburg that are being thrown around, we need to be realistic. The early days are over and the recent layoffs at Bigpoint proved that. I believe in healthy, sustainable growth. To me, the Eurozone crisis is not as much of a concern as the growing number of competitors in the free-to-play sector and competition for talent in the regional job market."

BRINGING HOME THE BACON

The stigma that surrounds free-to-play browser games has not gone away. But neither have the developers behind them. The ecosystem that has been built up in Hamburg is a testament to the fact these games have the means to enable huge growth.

Then again, looking ahead, there is awareness from part of Hamburg's development community that the platforms and business models that got them where they are today cannot be taken for granted.

Fishlabs' Hitzer is putting his faith in mobile: "Unlike the console and the browser games businesses, which are currently experiencing a phase of consolidation, mobile keeps growing and advancing at a rapid pace. Hence, the time to enter the industry could hardly be better."

Cross-platform development is the answer for some developers, like InnoGames, and where they go, service providers such as iLogos will follow. Increased complexity will result in the need for more skilled staff, not to mention new opportunities for external companies to aid production.

> ***"If Hamburg-based companies manage to build upon their online experience, I'm sure they will see prosperous years ahead."***
>
> Jan Werkmeister, Synthesis

Jan Werkmeister, localisation manager and partner at QA provider Synthesis Germany, warns that there will be no room for low-quality titles: "Great games will always work out, I believe, but it seems we are to a point where users don't accept poorly made games anymore. Quality will increase, budgets in the same manner and the number of games brought to the audience will decrease."

In spite of perception of the volatile nature of free-to-play, Quinke is confident that Hamburg will remain Germany's development capital: "Hamburg has a perfect environment for games developers. Even if some of them have to reduce their staff, we still expect growth in terms of the number of jobs. By summer 2013, we will count more than 4,500 people working in our industry."

Bytro Labs' Faber, too, is placing his trust in people's desire to play games: "Our customers live all over the world, so we are not dependent on a certain territory like the EU. In addition, more and more devices, like smartphones or tablets for instance, increase the time budget in which people can play games. Finally, I think people will always play games, no matter what the economical situation of a country is. As a result, I think the games sector is very resilient to crisis."

"In the end it depends on what people are playing and how they are paying for the games they play," says Werkmeister. "I'm confident that interactive entertainment will become the new 'Leitmedium' [key medium] and if Hamburg-based companies manage to build upon their online experience, I'm sure they will see prosperous years ahead. "Germany is a wealthy country and Hamburg is also one of its nicest cities. I'm sure a lot of people would love to work here. However, founding an umbrella factory could bring home the bacon as well." ■

Stefan Klein of Gamecity Hamburg (top), and Sven Ossenbrüggen from Xyrality (bottom)

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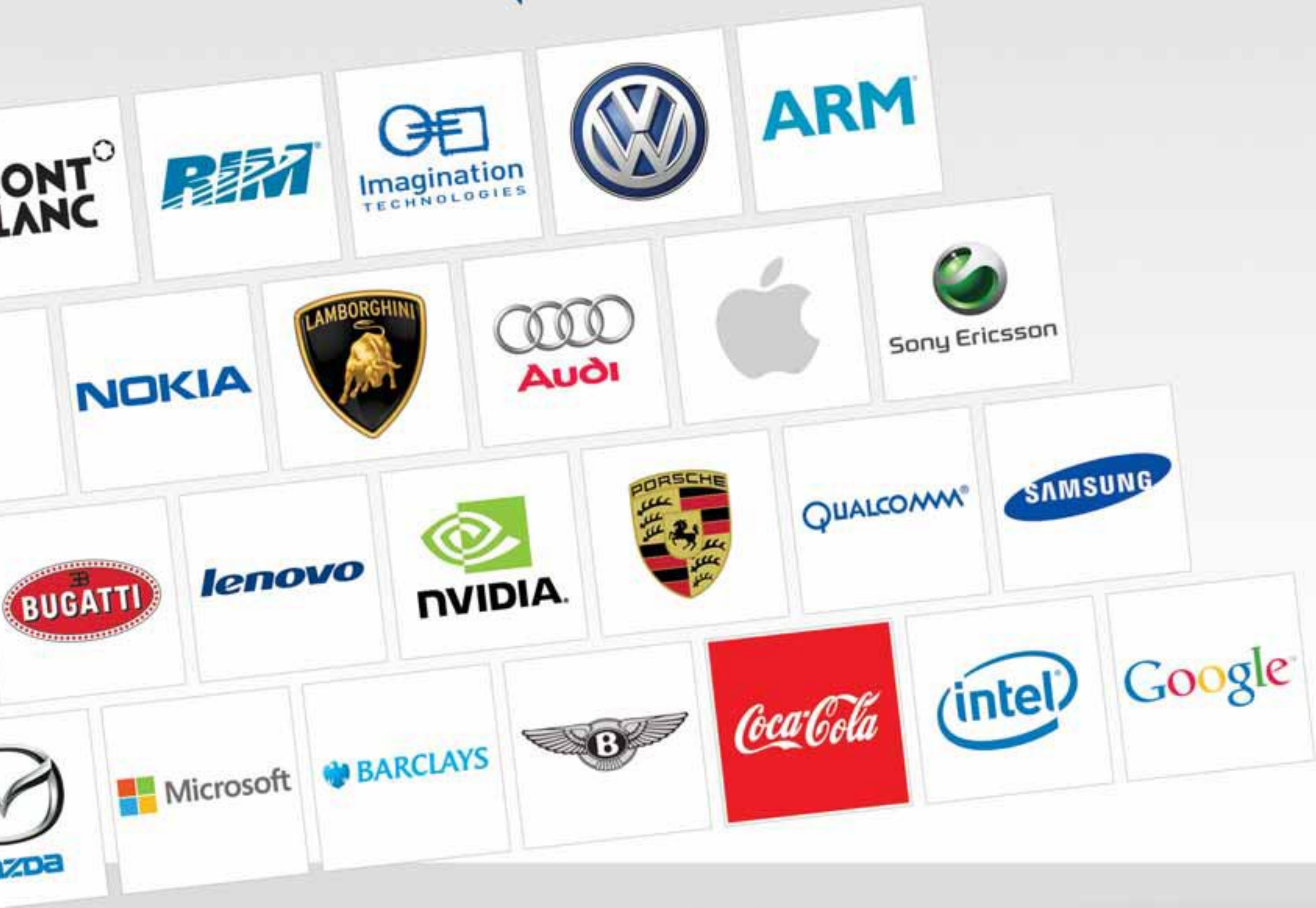
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A HAVEN IN HAMBURG

Photo: Christian Spahrbier

GAMECITY HAMBURG'S MISSION is to create an optimal business environment for the industry in Hamburg. The body is the largest network dedicated to the games industry in Germany, with more than 2,000 individual members to its name. It was established in 2003 as a public-private partnership funded by the City State of Hamburg, and is led by founders Achim Quinke and Stefan Klein.

"Our main strength is that we can provide the whole value chain of the games industry in one city," says Klein.

Gamecity provides studios with PR, affordable office space, consultancy, recruitment support, among other activities. The body puts listening to the needs of its members first, which has led to the creation of new kinds of services, such as recruiting tours to European universities. The importance of ensuring skilled students continue to enter the workforce is also a prime concern for Gamecity, which has underlined the need for more expert personnel in programming specifically. The network does its fair share to support games education in the city by hosting lecture series, providing advice on games development courses and partnering with local universities involved in technology and games-related research.

Most notably, the network has generated an atmosphere and culture among local studios that has resulted in an increase in jobs for the sector.

"Hamburg counts more than 4,000 employees in our industry, so we are far in front of other cities in Germany," Quinke says.

"Munich is a beautiful spot and Berlin is the place to be for parties and nightlife. But Hamburg is number one in terms of earning money and building sustainable studios. And of course we have a vibrant nightlife too."

www.gamecity-hamburg.de

GOODGAME STUDIOS

Founded: 2009
Headcount: 300+
Previous games: *Goodgame Empire, Goodgame Big Farm*
Current projects: Unannounced

BY ITS OWN account, 2012 was Goodgame's most successful year to date. The studio grew to over three hundred people, and it claims to have increased its turnover by several hundred per cent. Not to mention, declaring itself as the only studio in Germany to have its own swimming pool.

Dr Christian Wawrzinek, COO and co-founder of Goodgame, speaks amicably of his city: "The local firms all form a well-connected network. The public image of Hamburg as a stronghold of games development is good and consistent."

Goodgame develops and publishes free-to-play browser games through its web portal. It's themed games include fashion, farming and sci-fi titles, among others, and now have more than 100 million registered users.

"We are not driven by investors, and our growth results from our strategy for sustainable growth and outstanding performance," says Wawrzinek of the studio's indie status. "This is why we are looking forward to the coming year – we are convinced that we can increase our turnover even further in the year to follow, and that we will reach the goal that was set in the spring of last year. Namely, to extend our staff to 800 employees by the end of 2013."

www.goodgamestudios.com

XYRALITY

Founded: 2010
Headcount: 50
Previous games: *Lords & Knights, Crazy Tribes, Celtic Tribes*
Current projects: Unannounced

"RATHER THAN A particular studio model or development method, it's more the melting pot character that's typical of Hamburg's gaming industry," says Xyrality co-founder and co-CEO Sven Ossenbrüggen of his studio's home city. "We have a high variety of different companies and entrepreneurs that are either all about gaming or gaming-related."

Xyrality develops mobile MMOs for iOS and Android platforms, and more recently began implementing cross-platform development for its clients. For Ossenbrüggen, mobile is the strongest trend in the current market, and he says its is more of a platform shift than a straight technology shift.

Ossenbrüggen adds that the city's games trade body, Gamecity Hamburg, has given it good support financially and educationally. And, he says that developers are treated well by Hamburg's local government.

"At Xyrality, we have a corporate culture where all team members can see their commitment contributing to our success every day," he says. "To keep this spirit alive, we are always looking for ambitious employees striving for excellence in their job. In turn, Xyrality places a lot of responsibility on its employees so they can use their drive to create something new to achieve great things."

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FISHLABS ENTERTAINMENT

Founded: 2004
Headcount: 60
Previous games: *Galaxy on Fire 2, Snowboard Hero*
Current projects: Unannounced multiplayer title

MOBILE DEVELOPER FISHLABS has come into its own since the arrival of the iPhone.

Premium 3D games for smartphones, tablets and PCs are the Hamburg outfit's focus, and it has amassed over 50 million downloads for its titles to date, led by flagship series *Galaxy on Fire*.

"The big browser game companies do no longer just pursue a single strategy, but rather they become more and more interested in new businesses as well," explains Fishlabs marketing director Kai Hitzer.

"The hottest and most spectacular business of the hour is most likely the mobile business – which is quite good for us, because it's been our main field of interest ever since our foundation in 2004, and hence we've got a lot of unique experience and know-how in that area."

One particular factor that makes Hamburg especially attractive to developers is the infrastructure of the city's gaming scene, he continues: "Not least due to the Gamecity Hamburg initiative, there is a pretty vivid exchange and a rather cooperative workflow between the different companies. Employees and managers of all different kinds of gaming outfits meet each other regularly on industry parties, regulars' tables and other kinds of meetings. And on almost all occasions, it feels more as if you're talking to a peer than a competitor."

Fishlabs is currently working on its first multiplayer title.
www.fishlabs.net

INNOGAMES

Founded: 2007
Headcount: 220+
Previous games: *Tribal Wars, Grepolis, Forge of Empires*
Current projects: *Kartuga*, plus two unannounced titles

"HAMBURG IS THE capital of the gaming industry in Germany, especially in the online games market," says Hendrik Klindworth, CEO of InnoGames.

The studio started life as a part-time preoccupation for Klindworth, as he explains: "I grew up in the Hamburg area, and along with my brother [Eike] and our school friend [Michael Zillmer], we created the game *Tribal Wars* at a young age. In 2007, we started InnoGames to support the growing fanbase of the game, and we rented our first office in our hometown of Stade. When we started to outgrow that office, we knew we had to move closer to the city for better recruitment opportunities."

Today, the studio has over 200 staff working on its roster of free-to-play browser titles.

In 2013, it's moving into mobile apps, and looking to strengthen its business with new cross-platform productions. Job growth may vary from company to company, but Klindworth is confident Hamburg is the place to be.
"We wouldn't think of headquartering InnoGames anywhere else," he concludes.
www.innogames.com

ILOGOS EUROPE

Founded: 2006
Headcount: 200+
Previous projects: *Vector, Mega City, 11x11, Starboard Slots*
Current projects: Unannounced

"WE BRING GAME ideas to life," says iLogos co-founder and CEO Alexander Goldybin, by way of introduction. Formed in 2006, the independent outfit provides affordable production services for social, browser, mobile and cross-platform games. Among its customers are international names, such as Wargaming.net, Playdom, Peak Games, National Geographic Games, 6waves, FreshPlanet, Upjers and Youdagames.

Depending on its clients' needs, it can produce complete games, including creative services or work from existing design documents. It can also provide 2D/3D graphics, QA, testing or simply porting between platforms.

Goldybin's reason for working in Hamburg is practical: "Hamburg supplies an excellent talent pool for any company that grows as quickly as ours. For us, it is also an important factor to be able to offer our clients onshore legal benefits, paired with nearshore pricing. Besides, the quality of living is very high, while the cost of living is reasonable. So, overall, it is just a very good packaged deal.

"Within Germany, Hamburg is probably the most attractive city to live and work in. I would even say, it is rather attractive even on an international scale. This helps tremendously, finding skilled personnel and B2B partners to operate and grow a games business on. The Eurozone crisis might have a negative effect on the earnings of established companies, but it has also freed up potential talent to start up their gaming businesses."
www.ilogos.biz

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Under the bonnet of DmC p57

Taking tools global

Autodesk's Cory Mogk and Daniel Tutino-Galletti have toured the planet talking to customers from numerous industries. They explain what they learned about global trends, and what it all means to games developers, p50

AUTODESK
MAYA

Yippee Entertainment in the spotlight p52

Rightware's user interface middleware p56

Viewport 2.0 (DirectX 11)

Tricks of the trades

As GDC draws close, tools giant Autodesk has spent months analysing every industry it serves, as it prepares for the year ahead. **Will Freeman** talks to some of the team about what they've learned from their customers

Autodesk's Cory Mogk (top) and Daniel Tutino-Galletti (bottom) have been touring the globe absorbing feedback from Autodesk tech's userbase

IN THE CLOSING months of 2012, Autodesk has sent staff around the world, talking to customers and numerous representatives of the industries it serves.

The initiative has been about readying the next wave of its tech for a changing creative space, and has taught the outfit much about the demands of games developers, filmmakers and numerous other sectors. *Develop* caught up with Autodesk's senior production manger of suites Cory Mogk and Softimage product manager Daniel Tutino-Galletti, who have been touring the world, stopping off at numerous tech hubs, to find out what they have learned about the industry's changing landscape, and what it means for Autodesk customers.

Many point to an increased crossover of the technology and methods in place in the games, film and related industries. What is the reality of that trend from the Autodesk perspective?

Mogk: We've been noticing that and talking about it at Autodesk. There's three ways that's happening. There's, of course, always been the way that when someone makes a movie they want a game made out of it, or vica versa. Sometimes, in that case, there's asset sharing, which brings the tech together.

Then, a little more of a meaty thing is that when we look at what people in the film industry are doing around virtual production and pre-visualisation, they're really getting into games tools as a means to do that, because they get the high levels of interactivity, and the visual quality is now often on a very close level across the two. That's becoming very interesting to the film industry. And there's this cross-pollination of people moving between these industries.

> ***"What people in the film industry are doing around virtual production pre-viz, they're really getting into games tools."***
>
> Cory Mogk, Autodesk

Beyond that, on the games side what's interesting is where we see what some of the cinematics people are doing – whether it's collaboration where they ship it out, or if it's in house – we're seeing film pipelines being set up inside of games studios, so that instead of running Windows, they've got a bunch of Linux seats, and run that way.

A lot of other stuff that was traditionally more in the games space, such as sculpting high-res, making a low-res with displacement maps and so on is getting picked up outside of games.

And what is interesting to me here is how our DirectX 11 support will effect the crossover. DirectX 11 is a lot further ahead, or was until recently. OpenGL 4.3 has now got most of that stuff. It's something people in TV and film have been telling us they want.

And how are climbing production costs, and the demands of new technologies, like 'super HD', influencing Autodesk's work?

Mogk: The big thing there for us is performance, so that people can work with these large data sets, especially with games' next generation on the horizon. The expectation of quality is going up. In terms of these super HD high resolution TVs, that's maybe more easy for the games industry to

The recent DirectX 11 support has let Maya users create incredibly detailed models (above and opposite page)

react to that on the film side, because with film there's a lot of dependencies on projectors and theatres and such, whereas for games people, the games engine is that renderer and they can scale it up or down to match a device.

Tutino-Galletti: I guess you're also seeing those climbing production costs today with the retina display devices, with Apple being one of the first to get high resolution retina display quality on screens. It's inevitable that that is going to become the standard for most laptops and even computer screens. I think in the PC gaming world you'll see that come out sooner than elsewhere.

Mogk: I think one of the things we've been getting good feedback on is around the updates to FBX. Epic and Unity are two of the people we've been actively engaging with to really smooth out workflow for these new production challenges. We're looking at what we need to do for FBX to be an accurate representation that just goes straight out of Maya, Max or Softimage, right into the engine, so it's ready to roll.

Conversely, there's also the trend of more smaller games studios. What can Autodesk do to serve those studios?
Mogk: Well, that is a little bit tricky. One of the easier parts is where we do see a lot of the professionals changing focus a little bit and getting into the mobile space and online games. That helps to drive or lead things and set a bit of a precedent. Our products have always had a bit of an aspirational value from our Maya history over time.

We are conscious that people are starting to need easy to use tools, and more help with learning things. That's why we've introduced things like YouTube channels, and easily digestible snippets of Maya tutorials, Softimage tutorials and that kind of thing.

And going back to your mention of the new support for DirectX 11, why is that especially significant?
Mogk: There's a couple of significant parts. One is that Maya hasn't really had that support before, so it's a very new thing for us. Probably more important for the customer is that we're able to help more deliver on-target assets. As long as I can remember, there's sometimes been that moment when artists that realise something looks one way in their tool, and different in their game. Anything we can do to narrow that gap is very useful, and that quality we get with DirectX 11, and especially the stuff we're seeing with tessellation control and displacement mapping, is a huge benefit there.

Moving away from those details, as well as the established console manufacturers opening the doors to a new generation, platforms like Ouya, Oculus Rift, Shield and Piston are coming. How does Autodesk plan to move to address that opportunity?
Mogk: We're always watching what's going on there, in terms of differences in new platforms and their environments. We are watching that, and from my own geeky perspective, the Piston – the 'Steam Box' – is amazing. When you see that turned around and there's all those ports on the back, I wonder how they fit anything else in there.

What else is interesting that indicates a change is that lots of that stuff is running Linux. That's a really interesting difference. Though I'm not going to make a prediction about where that will go, we're in a good position to help people that way if we can.

And it's said there's a renewed emphasis within Autodesk to share technology, research and effort across your tools. Is that fair to say?
Mogk: I'd say that's fair. It's always existed, but you're right. It lets us develop things faster, and as the content requirements from people and the complexity is scaling up, so are the amount of requests we get for new features and new tools, so where we can double up and have shared components it certainly helps us address that stuff faster.

And Autodesk's work with new models of pipeline? How is Project Skyline evolving?
Mogk: We've certainly had a tonne of interest and feedback. It is still a project rather than a product, and in that respect a lot of that stuff is still as much learning experiences we've been doing as it is a technology. There's two really interesting things going on there, as we get that feedback. One is that a bunch of the tech is tying our tools closer to the games engine, which back ups the thing with DirectX 11 and FBX. There's lots of interest from people about that.

And then the other thing is the cool animation tools in terms of the state machines, and the triggers and events stuff that's happening there. We're thinking about how we can bring all that to market.

And will GDC be an interesting time for Autodesk customers in terms of what the company has planned?
I think so. I asked the team for an update before the holidays, and I've been on this trip around the world since, so I still need to synch up with people. We'll see exactly what happens, but it should be great. I can't really say any more. ■
www.autodesk.com

MICROSOFT SPOTLIGHT

When Yippee took iOS game Chimpact to the Windows Store, it found the process a great deal smoother than you might expect

The studio: Yippee Entertainment
Who are they? An indie studio founded in 2011 with 130-plus years of industry experience, headed up by Mike Delves, Lorraine Star and Stephen Ruddy
The game: *Chimpact*
What is it? An iOS hit that gracefully swung on the Windows Store, with a little help from Microsoft's BizSpark program
www.chimpact.com

Taking Chimpact (main) to the Windows Store was a relatively simple process, says Yippee's Stephen Ruddy (above)

IN THE CROWDED world of smartphone games, it's famously hard to create a hit. But Yippee Entertainment has done just that with its game *Chimpact*, which has thrived on both the Windows Store and iOS.

Debuting on iOS, after enjoying adoring reviews from fans and critics, *Chimpact* was earmarked for the Windows Store, with the Yippee team attracted by the range of platforms Microsoft's marketplace serves.

"Essentially, the biggest distinction on Windows 8 came about by our choice to support the vast laptop and desktop market available through the Windows Store," explains Yippee technical director Stephen Ruddy. "We committed to reworking our levels, rendering and UI to support the landscape view of the standard desktop monitor, while retaining our portrait view which gives a closer HD view on portables."

Clearly then, some effort was needed to ready the game for a move to Windows 8, and undertaking a careful reworking served Yippee far better than a straight port. And Microsoft were consistently on hand – not just with advice, but entire suites of tools.

Yippee had signed up to the tech company's BizSpark program, which helps new studios gain momentum with a wealth of support options.

"As members of BizSpark, the programme Microsoft runs to support start-up companies, access to tools and software could not be better," confirms Ruddy. "To develop Store apps we needed Windows 8 and Visual Studio 2012. BizSpark gave us free, instant access to both."

A HEAD START

Undeniably, access to free tools of such a caliber serves as a huge boon to any studio getting on its feet, but, according to the Yippee team, liaising with Microsoft staff proved equally useful.

"They supported us with direction for implementing core Windows 8 features and requirements, technical queries, testing, pre-cert and submission," says Ruddy. "They really did go above and beyond what we expected, so much so that after the Windows 8 version was completed we decided to get *Chimpact* submitted for Windows Phone 8."

> ***"As members of BizSpark, the programme Microsoft runs to support start-ups, access to tools and software could not be better."***
> Stephen Ruddy, Yippee

Evidently, Ruddy's experience has changed his perception of Microsoft, which is often imaged as far removed from the world of true independent studios.

"Obviously, you know the people working at Microsoft are regular guys just like you and me; but you can't help but have a little fear that you'll be dealing with the Borg collective," jokes Ruddy. "However, what came through with the guys who supported us was their genuine enthusiasm for Windows 8 games development – it this that was excellent to see."

REACHING OUT

It's of course good to hear that the support team at Microsoft have a sincere devotion to their platform and the indies that it attracts, but where Yippee reaped the greatest benefits was in the audience Windows 8 offered the studio.

"Our tech code base is cross-platform C++, with all our development and data pipelines running on Windows PCs – Visual Studio, Perforce, 3ds Max, Photoshop, Cubase, Qt Creator and Excel," states Ruddy, in a technical frame of mind.

At that point, Yippee already had a standard Windows *Chimpact* build running with DirectX 9 rendering and XACT 3 audio, which they used as a preview tool for art, design and audio.

"We had decided against developing this into a distributable version as we felt Windows as was, was really home to hardcore game players rather than the casual audience we are targeting – it didn't justify the additional work of creating an installer, supporting full screen under DirectX 9 – selecting devices and the like – and finding a distributor," continues Ruddy. "Windows 8 has changed this."

With the right demographics in reach, free tools available, and meaningful support, getting a game to the Windows Store appears easier than many expect. ■

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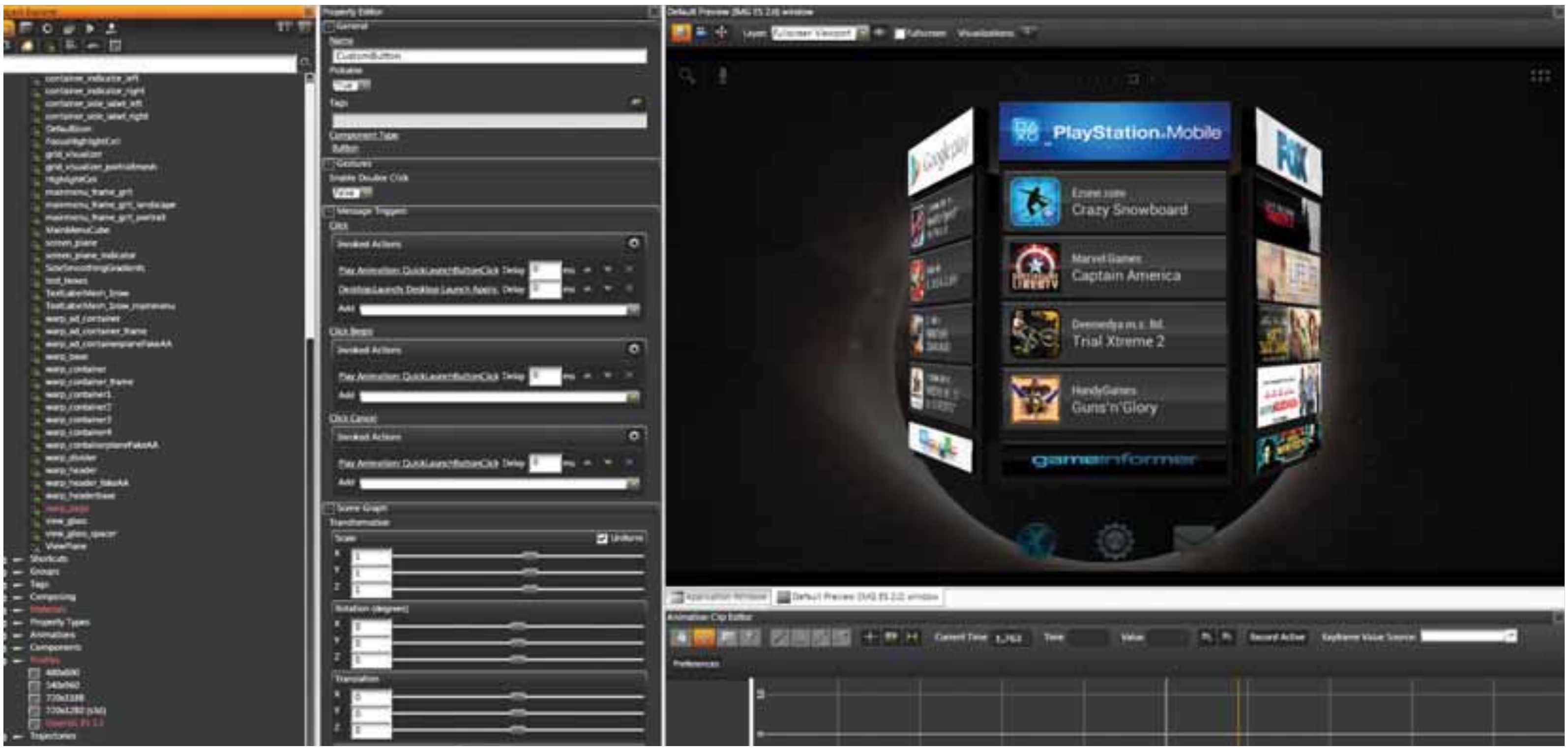
KEY RELEASE

Will Freeman on a UI solution famed in the motor industry that’s relevant for devs

WHAT IS IT?
Kanzi Studio is a tool for creating 2D and 3D UIs, powered by the Kanzi Engine
COMPANY: Rightware
www.rightware.com



Rightware’s UI technology Kanzi Studio (main), can facilitate all manner of platforms and control interfaces, says Arto Ruotsalainen (above)

WHEN THE INTERACTIVE entertainment industry’s academically-minded enthuse on the subject of gamification, dashboard displays in fuel-efficient cars underpinned by game theory are often thrust to the fore as a scintillating example of the concept’s potential to impact the real world.

Other than that, few developers spend much time pondering speedos and rev counters, unless, of course, they’re fashioning a driving game. The team at middleware outfit Rightware, however, are ever conscious of the technological parallels shared by motor vehicles and games consoles.

Their UI solution Kanzi has thrived in the car industry, and, increasingly, it is enjoying prevalence in the games business. Indeed, it seems that modern cliché about new cars needing IT support over mechanics might actually hold water.

UNDER THE BONNET

Conceived to provide a versatile tool for creating UI, Kanzi consists of two core elements. The Kanzi Engine, as you might expect from its name, powers and underpins the UI environment, while Kanzi Studio lets developers harness various different UI components and the ‘Advanced Visualization Pipeline’ to ease their task of contructing interfaces. In providing access to 2D and 3D GPU effects, Kanzi Studio lets users implement the likes of depth-of-field and shadow maps.

“Studio takes as input 2D and 3D files created in your favorite tool such as Photoshop or Autodesk 3ds Max,” explains Rightware vice president of developer programs Arto Ruotsalainen. “In addition, one of the key features is attaching events within the Studio to UI components; and these events can be anything: coming from keyboard, mouse, touchscreen, camera, app logic; you name it.”

Also, applicable for creating fully embedded user interfaces, Kanzi Studio is designed to plug into existing frameworks as easily as possible, and can even be used to create stand-alone apps.

And, insists Ruotsalainen, it is ideal for games makers.

> ***“We believe that Kanzi is the tool that can help developers differentiate their products no matter what new market they are in.”***
>
> Arto Ruotsalainen, Rightware

“For games developers, the appealing point comes from the included features; a state-of-the-art graphics engine optimised for all the latest mobile hardware out there, the content pipeline and its UI framework,” he says. “It can be used to create a full game by adding physics, sounds, networking, and artificial intelligence.”

FAST LANE GPU

And according to the team behind Kanzi, when compared to contemporary UI middleware Kanzi’s greatest asset is that it boasts a pipeline enhanced to use GPU acceleration, where both 2D and 3D go through the same OpenGL conduit.

Furthermore, all components built within Kanzi Studio exist in a 3D space, which can be used for laying out interfaces like item lists, for example to create an atypical spline so as to allow potentially unique user interactions.

“Also, we have patented technologies for optimising the UI and its visualisation, for things like high resolution displays where games need all the performance they can get, as it becomes really heavy for GPU to process huge amounts of pixels with effects.

“One of our patented graphics technologies is able to detect the changes in the display and only update those ones – easily increasing performance many times. What we basically did was to enable users to easily bring all that static content out there to life and interactive on your mobile devices.”

Kanzi, by necessity, is also designed to free developers from many of the challenges of implementing quality UI on touchscreens, by offering customisable gesture inputs around concepts like swipe, multi-touch and other related device inputs such as cameras.

Finally, Kanzi’s design as a middleware for a wealth of industries, from automotive and games to smart TVs, means that as mediums and devices continue to amalgamate, it’s arguably a tool with much potential for those embracing even the most intimidating of platform-spanning projects.

“We believe that Kanzi is the tool that can help developers differentiate their products no matter what new and emerging market they are in, including entertainment, mobile, tablets, smart TVs and other embedded verticals,” concludes Ruotsalainen.

A range of licensing models currently exist, but for curious parties, a free 30-day trial is currently available at the Rightware’s site. ■

EPIC DIARIES

Mark Rein and **John Gaudiosi** explore Unreal Engine 3's role in the return of Devil May Cry

DANTE IS GETTING a makeover. The mercenary demon hunter is back in action in *DmC: Devil May Cry*, a highly anticipated reboot of the franchise.

By working closely with Capcom, developer Ninja Theory stripped Dante to the bare essentials to incorporate the story of his origin into this new action adventure. The UK studio utilised Unreal Engine 3 (UE3) to bring this multi-world story to life.

Previously, Ninja Theory utilised UE3 technology to build *Enslaved: Odyssey to the West*, which was released by Namco Bandai.

"We've worked with the Unreal Engine for a long time now, and we found that the engine would enable us to achieve what we wanted with *DmC*, whilst at the same time allowing us to get involved in making the game straight away," says Dominic Matthews, communications manager at Ninja Theory. "A new engine would have meant at least six months' worth of learning before we could get started with the actual development."

Matthews continues: "We've learned what we can do with the engine and how we can modify it to our needs. Everything that we learned during *Enslaved* development we've been able to take into our work on *DmC*."

Tasked with reimagining DmC for a new audience, Ninja Theory has used UE3 to create a captivating parallel universe

OPENING WORLDS

Alex Jones, producer at Capcom, says UE3 allowed the team to create larger open areas than they'd done before, moving away from corridors, and giving them more flexibility in opening up the gameplay.

"Unreal Engine scripting is very flexible, so some of our game events are a little more involved than in previous *Devil May Cry* games," explains Jones.

Matthews says Ninja Theory used pretty much all of the engine's features at one point or another during the game's development.

"One really useful aspect for us was Unreal Matinee, as this allowed us to easily set up complex cutscenes and really get into the minutiae of achieving the filmic look that we're after," he says. "On a related front, the material system gives us complete control over the look and feel of every surface – early on we made the decision to allow our artists to create their own materials and this really helped us achieve the distinct atmosphere of the game."

Ninja Theory has been at the forefront of performance capture, having worked closely with actor and director Andy Serkis – of *Lord of the Rings* and *King Kong* fame – on *Enslaved* as well as *Heavenly Sword*, the studio's first PlayStation 3 creation. In *Devil May Cry*, Dante and the other characters are being brought to life using the studio's latest performance capture technology, which has excelled at pushing things forward over its past story-driven action games.

"We've developed an in-house facial motion capture solver that we used for all of the cinematic scenes in *Devil May Cry*," says Matthews. "This allows us to deliver top quality results without having to pay external companies to wrangle content for us."

CAPTIVATING STUFF

Performance capture plays an important role in bringing a Hollywood cinematic feel to the game. Early on, Capcom told Ninja Theory to think of Dante and *DmC* as a contemporary movie, as one goal is to introduce a fresh take on *Devil May Cry* to deliver it to a wider audience, while at the same time preserving and building on the DNA of the series.

"This idea of creating a Dante as if he were in a modern day movie has guided us through development," says Matthews. "We're very happy with where we've ended up and I hope that those new to the series and existing *Devil May Cry* fans will find a lot of fun in the game."

In order to improve the overall game experience, Ninja Theory built new technology on top of UE3 to customise lighting and shadowing, and to create faster and more accurate cloth simulations and faster particle systems. They also worked with Epic Games and other UE3 teams on the Unreal Developer Network (UDN) throughout the process.

"UDN is great for quickly looking up documentation, but it's the community forums that are invaluable," says Matthews. "All UE3 licensed developers have access to the forums so there's a lot of experience to draw upon, which always helps when there is a tricky issue to solve."

"Having an engine capable of cross-platform development from the start provides a huge advantage," Matthews concludes. "The platform flexibility that UE3 demonstrates was a key factor in allowing us to concentrate on the game itself. Rather than having to designate one console as a lead platform we were able to treat them as equals. There are, of course, systems that work differently between platforms but, thanks to the engine, these are the exception rather than the rule."

By allowing UE3 to do a lot of the heavy lifting, Ninja Theory was able to focus its efforts on creating a fresh approach to a beloved video game protagonist. *DmC* pushes the gameplay forward by giving players more choices, while offering a cinematic experience that's sure to attract a wide audience. ■

Thanks to Ninja Theory for speaking with freelance reporter John Gaudiosi for this story.

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UNITY FOCUS

Camoflaj on why they turned to Unity to make the crowdfunded République

RÉPUBLIQUE
What is it? A new cinematic action game for iOS, Mac and PC set in a dystopian future, and made by a veteran-packed start-up studio
www.camouflaj.com

The Camouflaj team (above, left-to-right): Ryan Payton, Ezra Hanson-White, Patrick Ascolese and Ron Harvey, and (above right), République's heroine Hope

THE STORY OF Kickstarter-funded iOS action game *République* starts not so long ago.

Back in 2011 a series of GDC Unity talks inspired the indie team at Camouflaj so much that they quickly started experimenting with prototyping with the engine.

Indeed, Ryan Payton, Patrick Ascolese, Ezra Hanson-White and Ron Harvey – who like many indies eschew specific job titles – looked at numerous other engines for their touch device title, but settled on Unity, and remain confident they have made the right decision, having been swung by the tech's suitability for cinematic experiences on portables.

"Unity's cross-platform flexibility has been very helpful here," explains Ascolese, who, with his colleagues, is also taking *République* to Mac and PC after consumer interest. "We aren't experienced Mac or iOS developers, so it's been a huge win that we can rapidly build and test our systems on the PC with confidence that they will work out of the box on iOS. As someone with years of experience in PC game compatibility and simultaneous cross-platform development, I can say that Unity does it as well, or better, than anything else I've seen."

WORK EXPERIENCE

Ascolese is in fact being understated when he refers to his experience in the industry – despite their indie status the Camouflaj team share between them a tremendous triple-A CV, having worked on projects including *Metal Gear Solid 4, Halo 4, Fear* and Kinect. It may well have been that heritage that helped the *République* Kickstarter drive sail past an ambitious $500,000 goal, and it was certainly that wealth of experience that led Camouflaj to evolve a creative hierarchy within the studio that bucks convention, where traditional job titles don't quite apply.

And even there, in the realm of studio ecosystems, the Unity engine has had a role to play for Camouflaj.

> ***"I think people will really be able to see the increase in République's animation quality that Mecanim has granted it."***
>
> Ron Harvey, Camouflaj

"The ease-of-use and instant accessibility of Unity has been a big win for us and has allowed us to get every team member more involved in the creative process on *République*," explains Payton. "Unity not only makes the engineers' jobs easier, but it's easy enough for designers, artists and animators to take full advantage of. For a technical dullard like myself, it's refreshing to know that he can load up Unity, quickly understand what's going on, and easily contribute something meaningful."

Opting for Unity also allowed *République's* creators to remain nimble, refining and adapting their game with minimum impact on the development schedule.

"The ability to tweak our content as the game runs has been helpful – the fact that all our code is there in-editor makes the iteration cycle very rapid," offers Hanson-White. "The Unity editor itself is extremely extensible; more so than we have seen with other editors. That allows us to tailor our own tools for fast workflow and spend more time refining the cinematic experience."

MECANIMS OF CHANGE

Hanson-White, of course, is referring to one of Unity's most established strengths, but the Camouflaj team were also lucky enough to harness some of the engine's new abilities to great effect. Being a cinematic game, *République* demanded filmic visuals, and thanks to Mecanim – introduced with Unity 4 – Camouflaj got just what it needed.

"We truly believe that Mecanim is one of the most powerful and flexible animation tools in the industry," says a clearly enamoured Harvey, who, with his co-workers, was able to make substantial use of Mecanim's transition tools and ability to seamlessly share animations among characters.

"Mecanim's preview tools have allowed not only animators to quickly troubleshoot animation issues, but also our devs and designers. I think people will really be able to see the increase in *République's* animation quality that Mecanim has granted with our upcoming new trailer."

And with that, the team must return to the toil, crafting a distinctly polished action game with big ambitions. ■

HEARD ABOUT

John Broomhall talks to SCEE's Alastair Lindsay about creating music for Wonderbook

Wonderbook
Developer/Publisher: Sony
Platform: PS3
www.playstation.com
/wonderbook

'USING THE PLAYSTATION Eye camera and Move controller, *Wonderbook* brings books to life via augmented reality and motion controllers'. So reads Sony's *Wonderbook* blurb.

The line succeeds in neatly and succinctly defining an ingenious, engaging and fun experience. Add in a collaboration with none other than *Harry Potter* creator, JK Rowling to the impressive tech, and you get *Book of Spells*, developed by Sony's London Studio. Though you may be waving the microphone-like wireless Move controller over a book-like set of bound plastic sheets in front of a small camera in your living room, what you actually see on-screen is magical. You're waving a rather famous wand, while the book itself displays as a glorious ancient tome, which in many and various ways comes to life with beautiful animation – from pop-up theatre sets, to blazing fireballs, to flying dragons.

At the early stages of development, the music content and systems for *Book of Spells* were prototyped using in-house composer talent to get the ball rolling, whilst music manager, Alastair Lindsay, started considering his options regarding eventual composer choice.

"In the end we decided it made total sense for the guys building the music systems and doing the implementation to continue on and write the final score," he says. "Our in-house composers Joe Thwaites and Jim Fowler knew the game inside out by then and are also really talented composers."

A PERFECT HARMONY

According to Lindsay the duo's technical understanding of *Wonderbook's* complex music delivery system and ability to implement their work proved extremely beneficial to the development in terms of a coherent integration into what had to be a world-class title.

"There are three layers of music able to run concurrently in the game – firstly, the minimal base layer which is essentially harmonic structure," offers Lindsay. "On top is an active layer with melodic content, which is ducked whenever voiceover plays. Then there's an incantation layer, which has the musical motifs of the spells that you've learned. Subtly adding that layer and manipulating all three adds a great deal of audio variety.

> **"There's not far off three hours' worth of score, with everything prototyped using sample libraries and MIDI recording."**
>
> Alastair Lindsay, SCE London

"Stylistically, there's an overall progression which follows the tone of the book itself and the story – starting off quite light, becoming darker and more epic as you go deeper. It reflects the music style of the era of the book's origins, then moving through about 100 years of musical history, using different orchestration and composition techniques. Each chapter is like a symphony with movements – theme and development, recapitulation and so on. This was the high-level concept that we brought into an interactive system. In total, there's not far off three hours' worth of score, with everything prototyped using sample libraries and MIDI recording before subsequent orchestral recording at Air Studios, London, engineered by Jake Jackson. We worked really hard to make the replay and transitions as seamless as possible."

A SCREAM TO MAKE

The music is implemented into the game software using Sony's Scream tool, allowing the composers to independently integrate the myriad one-shot and looping segments. For example, for an underscore there would be: start, end, spreads, base and an active layer with five incantation themes, five fanfares, test start, five test banks, ten practice banks and ten anecdote banks.

"Getting this system and organisation right was quite a challenge – also involving dynamic loading of data in-game, but of course this has to also take account of how the rest of the game is managing data," explains Lindsay. "As well as Scream allowing us to organise our files logically, it also has very powerful scripting facilities.

"Originally, we didn't plan to go down the route of wall-to-wall music – we're not big fans of that in games, but actually this is something new, and though you have VO and spot sound effects, you don't have much environmental sound in a title like this. We figured there would be lots of gaps and silence because of that, so made the decision to have a music backdrop gluing it all together. We just had to be sure it wouldn't become annoying at any point, hence all our efforts to ensure it doesn't get repetitive and that it's easy on the ear."

The end result is a pleasing listening experience where nothing jars. Considering the plethora of music cues across different musical keys, often replete with dozens of stings, and the fact the music plays more or less continuously, that's quite an achievement. ■

The SCE London audio team (top left) that worked on Wonderbook (top right) faced a unique project, says music manager Alastair Lindsay

John Broomhall is an independent audio director, consultant and content provider.
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Recruiter Hot Seat

Reflections' senior recruiter, **Craig Lawson**, first from left, and his team are ready to greet you. Here, he introduces you to what you can expect to be part of at the Newcastle studio

What are the benefits of working at a studio such as Reflections?
First and foremost, you will work on great products. We still have a few senior roles left on *Watch Dogs*, a title we are developing in collaboration with Ubisoft Montreal; and we have also recently shipped *Just Dance 4* on Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3, as well as contributing to *Far Cry 3*, *Sports Connection* on Wii U and *Ghost Recon Online*. So there is plenty going on.

I would also highlight our adventurous spirit – we champion independent thinkers and encourage our staff to be brave and original in their work. Reflections is a studio where your ideas are listened to and entrepreneurship is encouraged.

Another fantastic benefit is undoubtedly being part of the Ubisoft family – our staff have the resources and backing of the world's third largest publisher. This means you collaborate with amazing people from all over the world and have access to all the latest tech and tools needed to stay at the forefront of development.

Finally, Reflections is simply a great studio in a great location. We have fantastic experience and expertise, which spans 28 years. You will work with some of the greatest minds in the business, both at Reflections and throughout the Ubisoft network. We collaborate closely with studios worldwide, so there are plenty of opportunities for travel and career advancement. Newcastle is a great city; friendly, good for families, culture, nightlife, countryside, the beach; what more could you want?

How many new staff are you currently looking to take on at your development studio?
We are looking to take on an additional 50 people, which will take the studio up to two hundred. To manage this growth, we have expanded our in-house talent team, so applicants and agencies will be dealing with Will Brown *(far right)*, Kar-Man Hargreaves *(second from left)* and Lorna Evans *(third from left)*, as well as myself.

We are looking for experienced, senior people across programming, design, art, production and sound. So, basically, everything.

What perks or privileges are available to staff working at the games studio?
We have the usual perks you would expect, such as a work pension, family-wide medical insurance, gym membership and so on. However, the real perks come from working within the Ubisoft family, working with nationalities from all over the world, travel opportunities, working on the biggest games in the business and having access to the best resources in the industry.

What should aspiring developers do with their CV or their profolio to get to an interview?
Really try to stand out and go the extra mile. Include demos you have made, examples of your own projects, small games you have made outside of work. It shows passion and enthusiasm. Get creative; it will pay off.

BIO
Name: Craig Lawson
Title: Senior Recruiter
www.ubisoftgroup.com

GET THAT JOB

Development specialists offer advice on how you can bag that career leap

THIS MONTH: SENIOR PRODUCER

"Producers are all about getting games to market. But the specific responsibilities can vary greatly, from methodologies employed to the level of creative input expected.

"Ensure you know what the role advertised actually is, and that you want to do it. When applying, be sure to demonstrate that you have the relevant background and skills for the job on offer.

"Most recruiters tend towards people with prior experience; if you're after that first step into production or looking to break into games, your cover letter will need to be extra persuasive.

"Decide beforehand what you need to get out of the interview stage and be prepared to answer questions from any angle.

"It's vital that a producer fits in with the studio culture, so don't forget to bring your personality."

Stuart Bayliss,
Senior Producer, Stainless Games

SIX-SECOND STUDIO SPOTLIGHT

- *Mojaro and its parent company*, Virtual Intelligence, were found in mid 2010 by Laurent Ancessi, Nick Malaperiman and other staff from Sony, Xbox and Ubisoft
- Based in Vancouver and San Francisco, it has 16 employees
- The group has expertise making triple-A console and PC games, and wanted to bring that pedigree to mobile
- Its focus is on triple-A titles for smartphones and tablets
- Just iOS for now, but Android and Windows Phone 8 are coming
- "*KnightScape* is our first game, but we have others planned," says Malaperiman. "They will be set in other worlds and will all be combined in a top secret way"

www.mojaro.com

Ubisoft Reflections' in-house talent team (left-to-right): Craig Lawson, Kar-Man Hargreaves, Lorna Evans and Will Brown

What advice would you give perspective developers for a successful interview?
It is not just skills that Reflections is looking for. We are looking for you to show interest in our amazing portfolio of products and a passion for working within the Ubisoft family.

As I said earlier, at Reflections we are looking for people with an independent spirit, people who are willing to be brave and fight for their ideas – inspirational thinkers who can lead and motivate a team. We need people who fit this company culture.

> ***“Reflections is simply a great studio in a great location. You will work with some of the greatest minds in the business.”***
>
> Craig Lawson, Reflections

Who is the best interviewee you have ever had and how did they impress you?
It is all about enthusiasm; from when they walk in the door, to their tone of voice, a firm handshake and body language. We are okay with nerves, this is normal, but I am looking for your passion and enthusiasm to fill the room. Always give examples from your own experience of things that have worked well and not so well. Show that you have learned from your mistakes and are someone who is adaptable, but with bags of confidence and a strong sense of self.

And who was the worst?
Definitely the person who slumped in the chair, giving one-word answers in a monotone voice, who smelt of alcohol and answered his phone in the interview. Funnily enough I have not seen him since.

If your studio has recruited talent internationally, what was the process like for you and for the applicant? And what considerations should international applicants keep in mind?
At Reflections we are looking for the best people, full stop. That means recruiting from all over the world. We currently employ people from 11 different countries, including China, Egypt, Germany, Italy, Poland, the USA and Spain. Being friendly and having an international outlook is very much part of our culture.

We are extremely experienced in organising international visas and sponsorship and we very much encourage applicants from all over the world to contact us.

Is there anything else you wish to add about recruitment?
We need people who have passion, are adventurous and brave, and inspired to develop award-winning products and technology. If you think that is you, come to Reflections and you will have the opportunity to shine.

NEW STUDIO ALERT!

LEAMINGTON SPA'S NEWEST addition to the development circuit is Pixel Toys. Founded by Andrew Wafer and Alex Zoro in December 2012, the company is based in the same building where FreeStyleGames started exactly ten years ago.

“I've been in the industry for about 12 years and I've never seen more innovation, change and opportunity in it than right now,” says CEO Wafer, who previously worked at Codemasters. “There are more people playing than ever before, on new types of devices, in new genres and with changing business models. Smartphones and tablets really are being used for gaming and the volumes being sold are staggering.

“It feels like the industry isn't just evolving like it's done before. This time it's in full metamorphosis. I think it's worth getting in the driving seat to experience that and contribute to it. That's why we set up Pixel Toys, we want to make new and great games in exciting times and make them for these massive global audiences.”

Pixel Toys will be targeting high-end 3D games for mobile platforms. First however, it will be releasing a 2D platformer called *Super Little Acorns* on the 3DS eShop in March.

Currently a team of three, with some external contributors, the studio is now in a position to take on four more staff, and hopes to double that in 2014.

Wafer already has his eyes set on expansion: “The type of games we're building require a larger team than the average developer for mobile and tablet. We've got open positions for artists and programmers now and expect to have a lot more later in the year.”

www.pixeltoys.com

PIXELTOYS

MOVERS AND SHAKERS

This month: Dakko Dakko, FuturLab, Reflections and The Creative Assembly

DAKKO DAKKO

Dakko Dakko has hired long-time Relentless developer **DAN CROUCHER**.

Croucher was producer on *Buzz!* and *Kinect Nat Geo TV*, and continues that position at the Welsh studio.

It has also taken on *Soul Bubbles* programmer **THOMAS VOLBRECHT**.

"It's been superbly rewarding and enjoyable starting Dakko Dakko, and bringing two successful and highly personal games to players the world over, but I've missed the camaraderie and collaboration of a larger team," said Dakko Dakko founder Rhodri Broadbent. "Thom and Dan don't only bring considerable expertise and natural talent in their respective fields, but also boundless enthusiasm for gaming and a shared vision of what really makes games fun."

Croucher added: "This is a hugely exciting move for me. I've known Rhod for years, and I'm really looking forward to working together on the ambitious projects we have in the pipeline. With many years of experience at the top end of game development, this role is an amazing opportunity for me to make a change and be part of a small, highly-creative team."

Dakko Dakko is behind handheld titles *Floating Cloud God Saves the Pilgrims* and *The 2D Adventures of Rotating Octopus Character*.

FUTURLAB

Brighton studio FuturLab has hired **HUSSAIN SHEIKH** as its new head of technology.

In his new role, Sheikh is overseeing the development of *Velocity Ultra* for PS Vita, as well as four unannounced projects that are currently underway.

Previously, Sheikh has held the position of lead programmer at Relentless Software and Black Rock Studio, where he was also visual effects team lead on *Split/Second*.

While at Relentless, Sheikh helped to oversee the development of technology for Kinect title *Nat Geo TV*.

"I am thrilled to be joining FuturLab as they possess enormous creative energy, and have achieved some great success over the past few years. I am looking forward to contributing to their growing success, sharing lessons I've learned working on triple-A titles. It's going to be an exciting mix of art and technology and I can't wait to get started," said Sheikh.

FuturLab managing director James Marsden added: "Our goal is to give gamers something they can cherish, and whilst a large part of that requires world-class design, we also recognise that technical excellence is of paramount importance.

"So we're delighted to announce that Hussain will be joining us immediately, bringing a great deal of experience and leadership to our technical team. His ability to create very pretty visual effects should keep our fans happy too."

FuturLab has worked on a number of mobile and console titles including *Velocity*, *Coconut Dodge* and *Surge*.

REFLECTIONS

Reflections has taken on **LEWIS GRIFFIN** as its new audio director at the studio. In his new role, Griffin will bring his audio expertise to *Watch Dogs*, *Ghost Recon* and other Ubisoft properties.

Griffin has been part of Codemasters, Criterion and Rockstar London. Some of the projects he's contributed to include *Colin McRae*, *Burnout*, *Manhunt 2*, *Midnight Club*, *Red Dead Redemption*, *Max Payne 3* and, most recently, *GTA V*. He spends his spare time messing with synths and drum machines, as well as watching obscure Italian horror, and also happens to be a big Newcastle fan.

"Joining the Reflections team was a no-brainer," said Griffin. "They make innovative, critically acclaimed titles, they're based in a wonderful city, and I'm relishing the challenge of joining a very talented team."

Giselle Stewart, general manager at Reflections added: "It is a massive win for us that Lewis has chosen to join the Reflections team as our audio director. Reflections is expanding and having key members of staff who are independent thinkers and hugely creative is key to our success."

THE CREATIVE ASSEMBLY

MATT MCCAMLEY has been appointed as a senior audio designer at The Creative Assembly.

He will be working with the award-winning *Total War* audio team on *Rome II* and several as of yet unannounced titles.

McCamley previously worked at Ninja Theory on *Enslaved*, and just wrapped *DmC: Devil May Cry*. Before moving to the UK, he worked for Pandemic Studios.

"I'm digging working at CA already – such a talented, friendly group and killer audio department. I'm looking forward to seeing what tomorrow brings," said McCamley.

A classically trained percussionist from a young age, McCamley has also performed for royalty and toured internationally in the dance music scene.

Creative Assembly's audio lead Richard Beddow, added: "We're delighted to welcome on board such a highly talented audio professional in Matt. We're looking forward to him making a big impact on our formidable line-up of projects in development and further strengthening our already world class team."

Service & Tech Recruiter Hot Seat

Universally Speaking's CEO **Vickie Peggs** talks about openings at the QA and localisation specialist

What makes Universally Speaking different from other QA firms?
It's the clients we work with and the projects we work on that set us apart from our competition. We're very lucky to work with a wide range of leading games companies spanning mobile, console, MMO and more, giving a wealth of variety to each job.

In addition to this, we work hard on our company culture and staff retention. We have a relaxed and genuinely friendly working environment at Universally Speaking. Our open and flat management structure allows all team members to have a significant input on ideas and direction with the support of peers.

We are also proud to be able to boast around a 50/50 split of males and females in our office, which make for a fun and diverse bunch.

What benefits do you offer staff?
On top of the expected company benefits, such as a company pension scheme and ongoing training programmes, Universally Speaking has a number of additional perks.

For starters you can expect normal working hours. We operate a 9am to 5.30pm working day, as opposed to the usual unsocial hours typical for the games industry. However, if our projects require testers to work outside of normal hours, we offer paid overtime. We also supply dinner in case late night testing is needed.

We have regular Krispy Kreme deliveries, daily sweets and opportunities to attend games industry events, including our GamesCom lottery.

We are located on-site at the stunning Wyboston Lakes complex, in Bedfordshire, with fantastic facilities including water sports, golf, spa, gym, café and restaurant. All these are offered to us at a lower price thanks to our discount card.

Which disciplines are you most in need of?
We are constantly looking for great, new talent at Universally Speaking. Right now we are specifically looking for compliance testers and German language testers.

How have your staff needs changed?
In the past five years, with the emergence of multiple new platforms, QA has evolved beyond console, and testing skills and programmes have evolved alongside it. The scope and variety of projects has changed significantly with online and mobile. We are always on the lookout for tech-savvy testers with experience in all QA disciplines, but also knowledge of these many platforms and an understanding of the dynamics of gameplay and what players want.

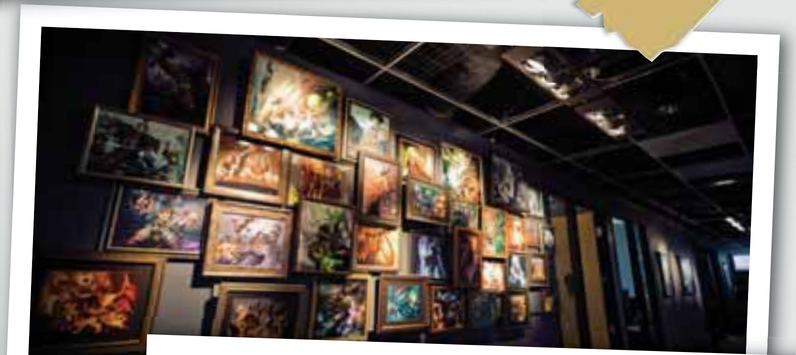
www.usspeaking.com

Playground Games

Warwickshire, UK
www.playground-games.com

Playground's racing roots are discreetly dotted around its practical, open-plan office. The motor-loving guys and girls sit in comfy chairs with headrests and lumbar support, while pixel art gaming icons point the way to its production rooms and kitchen.

THIS IS **WHERE WE WORK**



Blizzard Entertainment

Irvine, California, USA
www.blizzard.com

Blizzard's California HQ is as much a museum as it is a development studio. Statues celebrating its beloved sci-fi and fantasy series tower in hallways like sentries, while, in low-lit exhibits, its game lore is described in alluring pictorials and giant tableaus of wall art.

SERVICES SPOTLIGHT

This month: **RealtimeUK**

YOU MAY NOT know its name, but you'll be familiar with its work. RealtimeUK is the firm behind the announcement trailers for IPs including *MotorStorm*, *Transformers Universe Online* and *Kinectimals*. The Lancashire-based business was established in 1996 by MD Tony Prosser, shortly after he graduated from Blackpool College. Prosser's vision was to create a CG production house that could compete with the best in the business, but without the overheads.

Since then, it has stayed to its core values of continuous investment in new technologies and creativity, and has established a considerable track record.

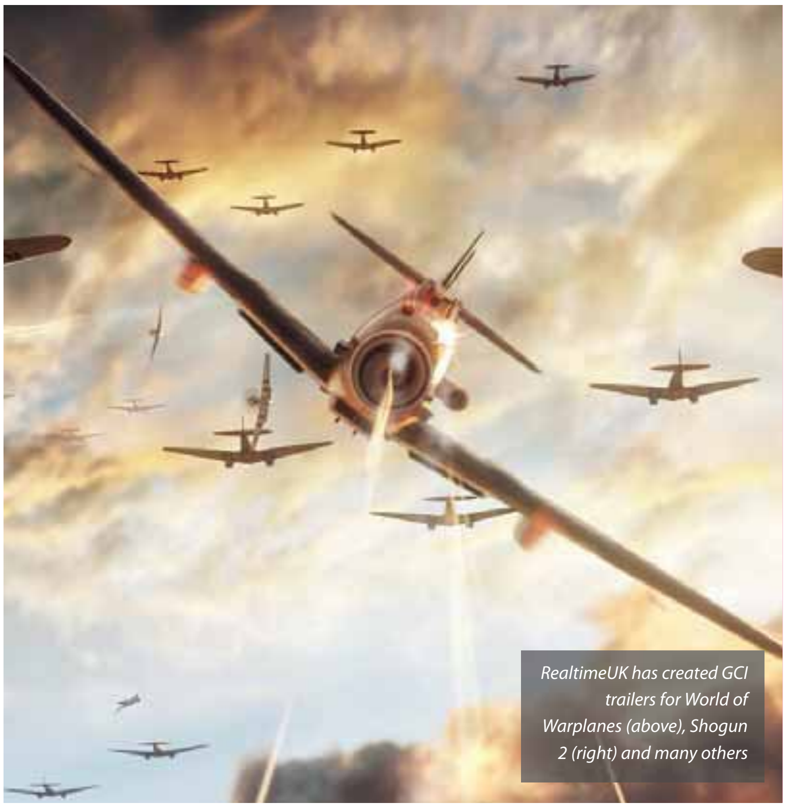
"Our most famous work is used for marketing purposes by publishers," account director Dave Cullinane tells *Develop*. "But there are a whole load of new IPs in which RealtimeUK has been instrumental in helping set the look and feel directly with the developer. This part of our service is in high demand at the moment as developers look to us to help achieve the suitable high fidelity quality that next-gen games demand."

RealtimeUK's full range of services includes cinematics, animation and marketing imagery.

For cinematics, it offers both pre-rendered and keyframed in-game solutions. An example of this would be the pre-rendered three-minute trailer for *Total War: Shogun 2*. In-game cinematics, such as those it has created for *Kinect Disneyland Adventures* or *Kinectimals*, require a more technical approach and closer collaboration with the development team. For animation, RealtimeUK can provide the traditional keyframe approach right up to the latest cutting-edge body and facial capture techniques. As it has matured, the studio has been give more over to creating believable human animations.

And with marketing imagery, its artists are able to create different styles, for client use on cover art, marketing campaigns and point of sales – everything from a loose speed painting to detailed CG.

"All our services are underpinned by a level of creativity that is unrivalled by other CG studios. That's why many of our clients keep returning to us with ever-challenging and increasingly exciting projects; because there's so much we can add creatively," explains Cullinane *(inset)*.



RealtimeUK has created GCI trailers for World of Warplanes (above), Shogun 2 (right) and many others

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RealtimeUK's expertise has been used to good effective creating exciting cinematics for racing titles such as *Dirt 3*, *Split Second* and the *MotorStorm* series. Other titles its worked on include *Kinect Sports: Season 2*, *Sniper: Ghost Warrior 2* and *World of Tanks*.

Cullinane says there's huge demand for cinematic services from the free-to-play sector right now, and attributes the success of *World of Tanks* maker Wargaming.net to it understanding the value that high fidelity trailers can bring in reaching out to its global community.

Today, RealtimeUK is heavily recruiting and opening up a new studio in Manchester. It's doing this in anticipation of the increased demand for its services that next-gen productions from clients looking to achieve an unprecedented level of fidelity. It also developing services such as lifelike character creation, as well as a new production pipeline that it believes will spur quality while reducing client costs.

"The level of fidelity expected by the discerning gamer in today's market is incredibly high. In an extremely precarious industry, publishers are increasingly guarded about their IP and don't want to risk tarnishing the reputation of their brand by releasing anything less than a trailer that offers the highest Hollywood movie production values," says Cullinane. "It's an enormous task to assemble the large teams needed to make the kinds of complex trailers that we make. Our clients come to us because they know we have the experience, creativity and market awareness to deliver ground-breaking productions on time and in budget."

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TOOLS SPOTLIGHT

This month: **Mixed Dimensions**

MIXED DIMENSIONS WAS founded in 2009 from a collaboration between CEO Muhannad Taslaq *(inset)* and his business partner Baha'aldeen Abu Nojaim. Their passion for gaming drove them to start one of the few games start-ups in the Middle East. Versed in technical and business backgrounds, they were however missing a major factor, which was art and assets creation.

This problem lend them to create GameDraw, a means to facilitate the asset creation process for indies and a new way for professionals to edit, create and optimise models.

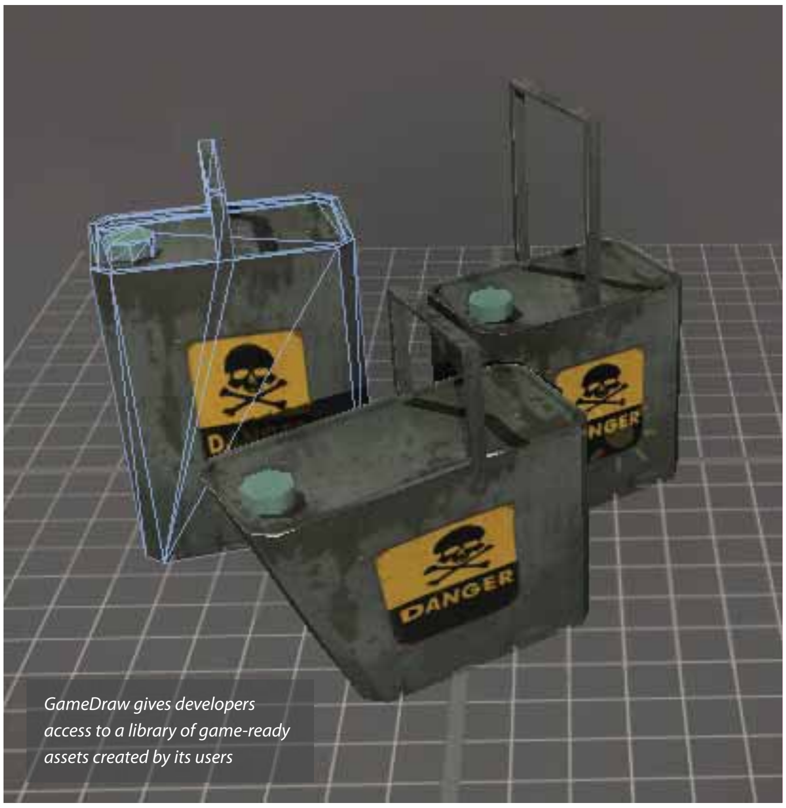
"GameDraw is unique because it provides the content as well as the ability to edit or create new content directly from within the game engine for a very low cost," explains Taslaq. "The models alone when sold separately can cost ten times more than the cost of GameDraw."

At its most simple, the tool enables you to create, modify and review assets. But it also allows for UV editing, the creation of primitives and integrating other creational utilities, such as procedural cities. What sets it apart is its 'Warehouse', a collection of game-ready assets that can be downloaded from its servers. The collection will continue to expand and Taslaq explains that all assets are optimised for game use with mobile platforms taken into consideration.

> ***"We believe that GameDraw has a great potential in both completing existing workflows or by starting new ones."***
>
> Muhannad Taslaq, Mixed Dimensions

"Our aim is to push artists and developers to share their content in the Warehouse, which will eventually create a huge community-generated repository," he states.

Taslaq says the technology currently has more than 500 users worldwide. The majority work in games



GameDraw gives developers access to a library of game-ready assets created by its users

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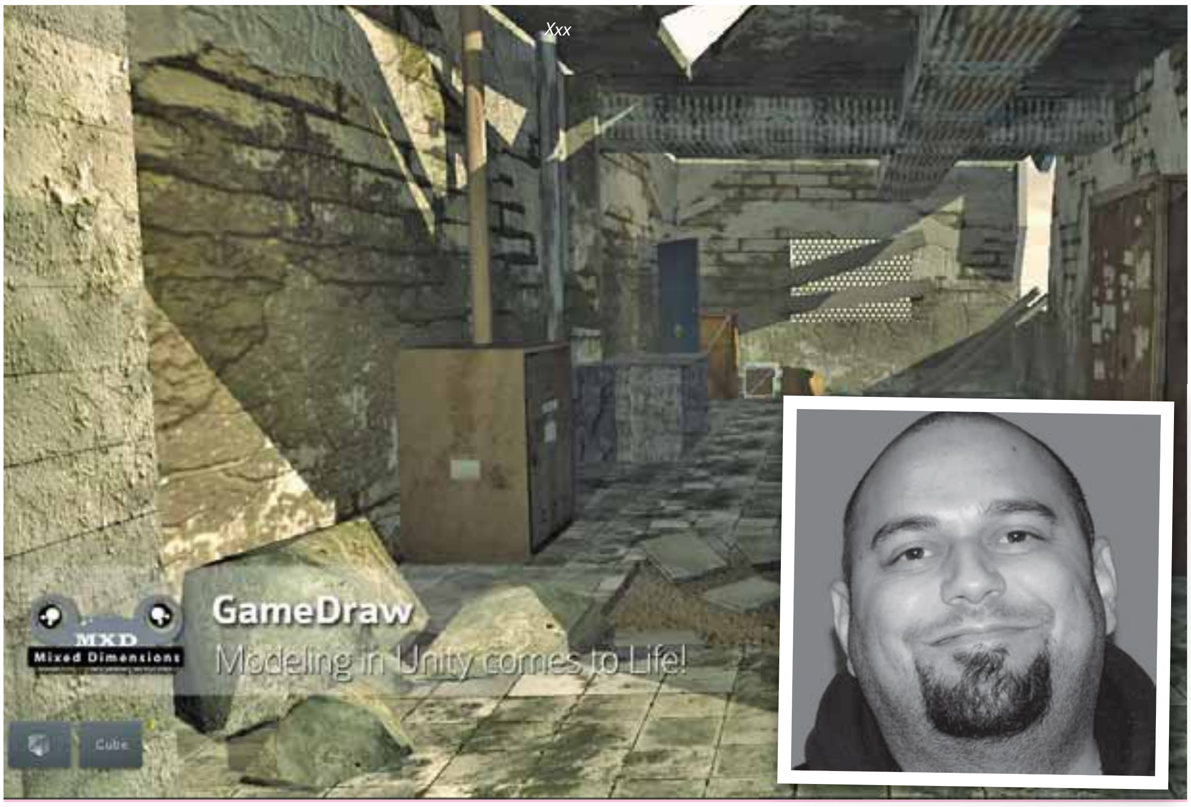

Xxx

development, although it has been used by others for architectural visualisations, scientific research, simulations and education.

GameDraw is accessible from within Unity, and Mixed Dimensions plan on bringing it to other engines, the web and tablet computers. New features recently added in its latest free update include a new GUI, mesh generation from two or more images and a customiser for users to create characters or other objects from different parts or states.

An online version of GameDraw is planned for release as early as the end of February. Taslaq believes this will be the first major step in his vision for an affordable asset creation tool that can be used across a variety of platforms that extend beyond the traditional work environment.

He concludes: "We believe that GameDraw has a great potential in both completing existing workflows or by starting a workflow that goes cross-platform. Mixed Dimensions will be establishing an office in Europe to better serve its clients and to be in direct touch with the industry."

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Images courtesy of Criterion Games

17 years of educating video game professionals

"The University of Hull have been a key partner for Criterion over the last 2 years, providing over 70% of our Graduate Engineering intake." Paul Ross, CTO, Criterion Games

"After some years working as a programmer, I decided to attend the MSc in Games Programming at Hull University. It was probably the best investment of my life. Now I'm a programmer at an AAA studio." Manuele Bonanno, MSc Graduate

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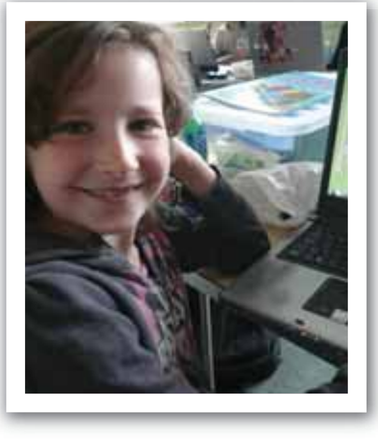
YoYo Games



THE COST OF technology is often the biggest obstacle for any serious games development course. GameMaker was created to tackle this problem, and according to its owner, YoYo Games, it is now used in over five thousand schools and universities worldwide.

GameMaker was created in 1999 by Professor Mark Overmars. The software, which takes the form of a trouble-free drag and drop interface, presents itself as the ideal solution for those looking to try their hand at games development for the first time.

That's one reason why it's the software of choice for Matthew Applegate *(right, above)*, a former lecturer of Suffolk New College who now runs his own after school computer club for children.

"GameMaker is simple enough for beginners and comprehensive enough for professional developers. That is why I use it in both situations," he says. "For my students, I can take them through the process of making a game in only a few hours, clicking and dragging the necessary components to make up the logic for a video game. By having the ability to click and drag, it removes the fear of making syntactical errors, making it a very empowering tool as the student can just focus on what is important, which is learning computational thinking or logic."

> ***"GameMaker is simple enough for beginners and comprehensive enough for professional developers. That is why I use it."***
>
> Matthew Applegate, Tutor

To break the ice, students get together in groups to make games and GameMaker is the software they use. In Applegate's experience, the program has benefitted his students by improving their logic, patience and work in subjects beyond games. As well as boosting their confidence, Applegate says skills developed in GameMaker are transferable.

"I know I can move a student to other languages – like processing – afterwards if I need to, as the logic is compatible." he explains.

GameMaker's latest edition allows games to be exported to HTML5, as well as mobile platforms including Android, iOS and Windows Phone 8.

There are undoubtedly alternatives able for thrifty institutes – UDK for instance – but GameMaker is a package that serves a broad range of needs.

"It is the duality of being able to click and drag a program together or to be able to code it in GML – its native language – which sets it apart from other languages, and you get to make games," Applegate testifies. "What is a better carrot on the end of the stick? Learning by stealth, and at the end you have something that is meaningful and current to all the students; a game."

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University of Derby

MANY COURSES PUT 'games' in the title to put bums on seats, Derby programme leader Phil Morris *(inset left)* tells *Develop*. Where his course differs is what he calls a "genuine focus on quality", taught by lecturers with industry experience. Derby's courses – BSc (Hons) Computer Games Programming and BA (Hons) Computer Games Modelling and Animation – are vocational. Its faculty is teaching students the skills they need to get on in the industry.

"Feedback tells us that we are doing the right thing," says Morris. "In the last two years, our feedback rating from students has been extremely high, making our courses among the best in the UK. It's no coincidence that one of our programmers, Andrew Roper, was in *Develop*'s 30 Under 30 list." *(see Develop #134)*

Morris and his staff aim to instil a sense of responsibility in their students to both learn from the lecturers as well as to work together to learn new ways of doing things. That way students don't just get taught, but also come back to them with new ways of doing things, he says.

Students are taught the basics, such as life drawing, Maya, clay sculpting and ZBrush in the first year. In the second year, students expand what they have learned using Photoshop and UDK. And in the final year, they are giving the chance to seriously concentrate on their portfolio. They make use of Adobe After Effects and Dreamweaver, and have the chance to target their work at a specific games company. Students also work towards making a 'vertical slice' demo based on a simple brief, which is done in 12 weeks. Selected games that qualify then go through to Derby's expo, where the public and industry get to view the students' endeavours – such as *SS Eternity*, which is said to have impressed Epic's Mark Rein.

Placement opportunities are fiercely sought in the games sector. Alumni of Derby's programming and animation courses who have formed their own independent companies have begun returning to the university to cooperate with current students.

The university has close ties with Evolution Studios, but also has connections with Microsoft, Codemasters, Disney and various Sony divisions. Graduates have gone on to work at Playground Games, Lionhead, Reloaded and Splash Damage, while others have found work outside the industry in research and development.

> ***"In the last two years, our feedback rating from students has been extremely high, making our courses among the best."***
>
> Jon Pledger, Uni of Derby

From a tech point of view, the university uses the handful of software packages mentioned above. The reason for this, says Jon Pledger *(inset right)*, senior lecturer on the CGMA course, is not to bamboozle students with a lot of different software, as they have enough to learn. Derby is one of the few recognised academic partners with Epic Games in the UK. It also now provides CryEngine and is looking to build on this in future.

In addition to improving its tech, the university plans to encourage closer collaboration between its student programmers and artists through games development competitions and strengthening its industry links.

"Games education in many universities has improved, but the games industry can still perceive universities as being out of touch when it comes to understanding the needs of developers. This isn't true at Derby," Pledger declares. "The future is about fostering good working relationships between industry and academia. This way we can turn out students that are ready for work, but who can also bring something new to the table."

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CODA

A sideways look at the games industry

THE INDUSTRY IN 140 CHARACTERS

A month in tweets by the industry elite

@br
This just in: a text from the 14-year-old telling us to turn the music down. Oops.

(Brenda Romero, LootDrop)
December 28th

@fullbright
Protip: don't name your game something that vanity searching results in a Taylor Swift lyric

(Steve Gaynor, The Fullbright Company)
January 8th

@GrumpyGamer
Adventure Games are not games with puzzles. Adventure Games are games with adventure game puzzles.

(Ron Gilbert, adventure game designer)
December 28th

@MartinCaine
I've only just thought, Nvidia Shield + Oculus Rift, how awesome will that be?! Hopefully there'll be an Android driver available for it!
(Martin Caine, Retro Burn Games)
January 9th

@JenovaChen
We pay for each thing we achieve. Career, family, love. Life is fair as time is equal to everyone. Keep pursuing your own dream. Happy 2013!
(Jenova Chen, Thatgamecompany)
January 1st

@K_0
It's just occurred to me that I can now say "I was developing games while you were still in nappies" to my students with complete accuracy.
(Kaye Elling, games development lecturer)
January 9th

@NolanBushnell
Crowd funding is perhaps the best enabler of creativity in the last 100 years. Now if the SEC would get off their asses.
(Nolan Bushnell, Atari founder)
January 6th

@BenjaminCousins
Valve are making a Linux-based general purpose entertainment device, and it looks like it could work. Imagine reading that in 1998
(Ben Cousins, Scattered)
January 9th

@JohnNoonan
The problem with Wii U style streaming from my PC, is that nobody is ever hogging my PC watching *Downton Abbey*.
(John Noonan, Microsoft Studios)
January 7th

@numberless
Deep Silver describes the torso as a "zombie torso", despite it having healthy-colored skin and being part of the "zombie bait edition"
(Scott Jon Siegel, PopCap)
January 15th

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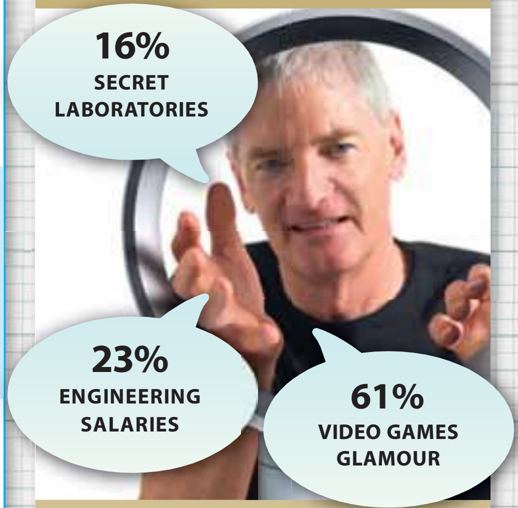
AN OPEN MIND

JAMES DYSON

The famed UK inventor and vacuum cleaner designer takes a swipe at video games and those pesky East London hipsters



Speaking to UK magazine the *Radio Times* about how video games are too glamorous and over-supported by government: "I am concerned that we are sometimes distracted by the glamour of web fads and video gaming rather than the development of tangible technology. There seems to be an obsession with Shoreditch's so called 'Silicon Roundabout' [London, UK]. We should be more concerned about creating engineering clusters."

Another point about technology workers that is a little less provocative: "Engineering graduates need to be encouraged with generous salaries; £7,000 a year for postgraduate research is insulting."

Explaining how he has to defend his iconic design company from ideas theft: "Dyson research labs are now in total lockdown – our research is simply to valuable to risk being stolen."

IT FIGURES:

KICKSTARTER'S GOOD YEAR

Kickstarter had a stand out year in **2012**. Over the year **2,241,475** users pledged a total of **$319,786,629** between them, successfully funding **18,109** projects. That works out at a quite staggering **$606.76** pledged for every **one** minute. Of those backers, **570,672** people backed **two** or more projects in **2012**, **50,047** chose to support **ten** or more projects, and **452** devoted souls backed **100** or more projects. Those backers came from **177** countries – accounting for **90 per cent** of the nations on Earth. While music-based projects got the highest number of funded ideas (**5,067**) gaming received the most money pledged, **$83 million** put forward. In **2012**, just **17** projects managed to raise over **$1 million**, including Oculus Rift *(pictured)*. In the same year, Kickstarter celebrated its **third** birthday.

THE DEVELOP DICTIONARY

Our guide to games development terminology brings you the best and the worst of industry jargon. This month we bring you the letter F

Facial capture – *The process of using technology to virtually take and reproduce the facial expressions of a real world performer. Numerous methods exist from the marker-based to audio-driven.*

False dilemma – *A method of control of player progression whereby unreasonably limited choices (where the sense of limitation is often hidden from the player) force progression or narrative through a particular route.*

Farming – *A consumer act, sometimes for financial reward, but typically for gameplay progression, where a simple task is repeated for gain of in-game currency, items and such. See also 'Milking'.*

Feature creep – *The adding of additional features – often after the completion of a game design document – by overenthusiastic developers, which infamously leads to delays, especially to a release date.*

Feature list – *Something a PR or marketing type will ask for just as you suspect you might be crunching.*

Fidget – *An in-game character's animation cycle for when said character is standing idle for a set amount of time, free from player input or interaction.*

Finite state machine – *In the realm of artificial intelligence (AI), where a system of behaviour's state (condition) is streamlined so as to be represented diagrammatically – usually as a flowchart.*

Firmware – *A fixed form of software programmed into ROM. A right pain now it is something consumers update in their own machines.*

First-Person Shooter – *A genre of games where everything is typically grey or brown or a combination of the two*

Flash – *This might just be Apple's least favourite Adobe platform, but it remains very popular with indies and those doing client work. Also a data storage hardware solution, and the removal of data from such solutions.*

FMV – *A term that seems to have fallen from fashion – at least in the consumer press – that is used to describe a non-interactive sequence or cutscene. From 'Full Motion Video'.*

Fog of war – *A convenient method for hiding information from the player – or for hiding what your tech can't handle.*

Forum – *A place with great potential for community building, and a great place to be demoralised by your fanbase.*

Free-to-play – *Either the most evil business and games design model in the world, or the future of the industry. You can decide for yourself. Also 'F2P'.*

Frustrum culling – *A process of removing the rendering of in-game objects out of the area visible on screen, or 'viewing frustrum'.*

Fuzzy logic – *A relatively intricate AI implementation where more than simple yes or no decisions are consider by an AI. Also a great album by indie band the Super Furry Animals, who probably weren't referring to games development techniques.*

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FORWARD PLANNER

MARCH 2013 (GDC show issue)

BUILD SPECIAL FOCUS: GAME ENGINES
From the triple-A giants to the bedroom coding upstarts, we round-up the engines keeping games development motoring

FREE-TO-PLAY FOCUS
A renewed look at the rise and rise of the sometimes controversial payment model that looks set to be here to stay

REGION FOCUS: CANADA

EVENTS:
GDC, San Francisco – March 25th to 29th

APRIL 2013

LOCALISATION SPECIAL
With an increasingly sophisticated global marketplace, the pressure is higher than ever to reach audiences in their first language. We speak to the firms making that happen

BUILD SPECIAL FEATURE: DISCOVERY AND DISTRIBUTION
With more new platforms to consider than ever before, the discoverability challenge is greater than ever. Experts offer insight into getting your game noticed

REGIONAL FOCUS: CHINA

EVENTS:
Festival of Games, Amsterdam – April 23th to 25th

MAY 2013

THE FUTURE OF GAMES AUDIO
A fresh examination of music and audio for the games sector, from in-house teams and hardware to outsourcers

BUILD SPECIAL FEATURE: QA
How teams that stamp out bugs and ensure you pass certification work – and how to get the most out of them

REGIONAL FOCUS: HUNGARY

EVENTS:
Nordic Game, Malmö – May 22nd to 24th
Develop Quiz, London – May 15th

JUNE 2013

HR & STUDIO MANAGEMENT SPECIAL
Once you've secured the right team for your studio, there's plenty else to keep you busy. The experts explain how to make sure your development staff are happy, motivated and productive

BUILD SPECIAL FEATURE: AI & CHARACTER BEHAVIOUR
An update on what's new in the world of AI tools and making characters move more realistically

REGION FOCUS: IRELAND

EVENTS:
E3, Los Angeles – June 11th to 13th

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THE FAQ PAGE: JASON GRAVES

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Who are you and what do you do?
My name is Jason Graves and I bang on things for a living. I've also been known to compose music for film, TV and video games.

What are you working on right now?
I just wrapped up the scores for *Dead Space 3* and *Tomb Raider*, so I'm putting the finishing touches on their soundtracks. I also have a few films and multiple games in the works that, unfortunately, I am sworn to secrecy on.

What was the first video game or product that you ever worked on in the industry?
King Arthur in 2008. Fifty minutes of music in three weeks – an eye opener compared to my usual ad work back then, which was more like the same thirty seconds of music over and over again for six weeks.

What was the first video game you ever played, and did you enjoy it?
Space Invaders, the tabletop version, waiting at a restaurant with my parents. My Dad only had a few quarters and I took his spare change to the bar for more quarters so I could keep playing. After that I was hooked.

What was the most recent video game you played, and did you enjoy it?
I've probably played through the new *Tomb Raider* eight times. Oh, you mean games I'm not working on? *Far Cry 3* and *Arkham City* – I really enjoyed both.

What is your favourite game ever and why?
I was addicted to any side-scroller spaceship game as a kid. I think that's stuck with me through time. I also really, really love playing games like *1941*, which is a vertical scroller.

What area of the games industry do you think needs more 'investment'?
Bringing composers in earlier in the development cycle of a game, even if there isn't a clear idea for the music direction. That's one of the most critical – and easiest – investments a developer can make in the overall sound and originality of their title.

What do you enjoy about the video games industry today?
Hands down, the wonderful people and the creativity they foster in the industry.

What disappoints you about the video games industry today?
When a company allows the marketing department to be the driving force behind a title. Nothing is more disappointing than being asked to copy something that came before, just because it was successful, and not be allowed to innovate on your own.

> ***"Bringing composers in earlier in the development cycle of a game; that's one of the most critical investments a developer can make in the overall originality of their title."***

Of all the games you have worked on, which has been your favourite?
Tomb Raider, hands down. They let me run free and try things I've never done before. And they included all of it in the final score.

What game that you weren't involved with would you most liked to have worked on?
Any of the *Elder Scrolls* titles. I just love that genre and the universe they created.

What other video games developer do you most admire?
Naughty Dog. I think they've done a wonderful job with immersive, high-quality storytelling in their games.

What hobbies, collections or interests do you have that are unrelated to video games?
Cooking. I'm slightly obsessed. I even have chickens in my backyard – right next to the studio – for access to organic, fresh eggs every day.

What is your favourite book, film, television show and album of all time?
Hard to pick favourites, but currently I'm reading *Kind of Blue: The Making of the Miles Davis Masterpiece*, really enjoying the BBC's new season of *Sherlock* and have been listening to a great local band, from Durham, North Carolina, called Delta Rae.

Composer Jason Graves has produced scores for dozens of games, films and promotional trailers

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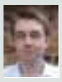

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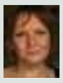

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